THE POLITICS OF PATRIOTISM

G. L. Kristianson

The Pressure Group Activities of the Returned Servicemen's League

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THE POLITICS OF PATRIOTISM: THE PRESSURE GROUP ACTIVITIES OF THE RETURNED SERVICEMEN'S LEAGUE

G. L. Kristianson

As Australia's largest veterans' organization, the R.S.L. has been the subject of bitter controversy. The League has often been attacked, and as frequently defended, but it has never been examined in depth by an impartial observer.

This book is the first detailed and dispassionate examination. It is not an 'official', or even an authorized account of the R.S.L.'s pressure group activities—while the League provided unrestricted access to its files and records, the organization's leaders exercised no censorship or control over the final results.

The author examines the R.S.L.'s attempts to influence the Commonwealth government against a background of continual internal conflict over tactics. He describes the constant approaches to the government on pensions, medical benefits, war service homes, soldier settlement, employment preference, and gratuities, as well as on such controversial subjects as defence and anti-communism, all of which serve to mark the R.S.L. as one of Australia's most active pressure groups.

The book also points to the danger implicit in the R.S.L.'s attempt to monopolize the virtues which it claims are uniquely Australian. In its rigid enforcement of the exclusiveness of Anzac Day, it is argued, lie both the League's peculiar strength and its greatest problems.

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The Politics of Patriotism
An Anzac Day March, Sydney
The Politics of Patriotism

The Pressure Group Activities of the Returned Servicemen's League

G. L. Kristianson
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AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY PRESS
CANBERRA
TO MY WIFE

who has so often had to
adjust her life to suit
the demands of my work
Preface

Research into pressure group politics necessarily involves the problem of access. Meaningful statements about pressure groups cannot be made without access to the leaders, members, and records of individual groups as well as to the recipients of pressure. At the same time, many groups and most governments are suspicious of attempts to subject them and their activities to detailed examination. They hesitate to open themselves to scrutiny, and access to information is often confined by restrictions amounting to censorship.

The research for this book was carried out with the full co-operation of the Returned Servicemen’s League—co-operation which came as a surprise to many and which indicates that other pressure groups might, if properly approached, be similarly helpful. For an extended period access was had to the correspondence files and other records held by the national headquarters of the League as well as to relevant material at the several state headquarters. The records at the national level were complete back to the time of the organization's inception in 1916 and no restrictions were placed upon their use. The author was not aware of any attempt to keep material from him, indeed numerous files marked ‘confidential’ were examined. In short, all records were made available and no limitation or censorship was imposed on the manuscript before publication.

Access was had to material at the national level as well as to such branch files and records as were requested. Full co-operation was given with regard to interviews with national, state, and local leaders. Attendance at meetings at all levels within the League was permitted, including meetings of National Congress, the National Executive and its committees, state congresses and council meetings, and sub-branch meetings. Several sub-branches co-operated in the distribution of a questionnaire to their members. Government material was also consulted. A number of Repatriation
Preface

Department files were examined and interviews were conducted with personnel in the several departments which have dealings with the R.S.L. Appropriate political leaders were consulted and were most co-operative.

In a work based primarily on original and private sources, the question of authenticity must inevitably be raised.

One can never be absolutely certain that any file or other record presents a complete and authentic account of proceedings on any particular issue. This problem is common to the writing of all history. On the other hand it is possible to check one file against others as well as against events as revealed in various public documents, government files, and personal reminiscences. In compiling an account of R.S.L. pressure group activities such verification was constantly attempted. In all, the files and other records appeared to be remarkably complete and there was no indication that any material had been deliberately tampered with. Indeed, at several points the League’s files appeared to be more complete and more accurate than individual memories.

As to the aptness of the author’s selection of material, this can only be tested on grounds of logic and coherence and by comparison with public records. Barring access to the private material cited by the author, the reader can only trust to the writer’s integrity and an assurance that an attempt was made, at all times, to portray an accurate picture of events. Certainly, as a stranger to Australia, the author had few preconceptions about the R.S.L. and no prior commitments in terms of ideology. If the material presented seems to contradict common pre-suppositions, then any critics must be challenged to produce more convincing evidence. Certainly a conscious attempt was made to remain impartial and to avoid either involvement with or hostility to the R.S.L.

Use of the term ‘pressure group’ to describe the R.S.L. and other organizations was adopted after serious deliberation. The objections which have been raised to the term because of its sometimes unfavourable connotation were noted, but overruled. The value of the term in an objective sense was judged to far outweigh objections on connotative grounds. ‘Lobby’, the term favoured by Professor Finer in Anon.
Preface

Empire, was judged unsuitable because of its specific denotative reference to one aspect of pressure group activities—those carried out in the lobbies of a legislative building—and its reference to a multiplicity of groups taken together. If connotation were a criterion, of course, the objections to ‘lobby’ would doubtless be seen by some as much stronger than the objections to ‘pressure group’.

Because of its definite overtones of action, ‘pressure group’, defined in Professor Odegard’s sense as describing a group which ‘represents a particular economic or other interest whose welfare and social interest it seeks to advance’,¹ seemed a better term than any other. ‘Interest’ should be used in a wider sense as referring to collections of common points of view. Any interest group is a potential pressure group and pressure group politics can be defined as involving ‘the political promotion of interests and values . . . the attempt to realize aspirations through governmental decision-making . . . it involves something less than an attempt by the group to become itself the government. . . .’²

Over the course of nearly three years the subject matter of this book was discussed with innumerable people. It is not possible to acknowledge everyone who assisted me but particular thanks are due to some.

First, I must thank the members of the National Executive of the R.S.L. Without the Executive’s co-operation this work could not have been done. A. J. Lee, Sir Raymond Huish, Sir William Yeo, Sir Charles McKay (and his successor W. Hall), T. C. Eastick, W. S. Lonnie, C. J. Geard, R. F. Bunting, D. W. Elliman, and Air Vice-Marshall F. M. Bladin were all extremely helpful and very frank. Special mention must be made of the assistance given by A. G. W. Keys who, as National Secretary, initially recommended co-operation in the project, and who, despite the onerous burden of his work, was always available and invariably helpful.

Mention must also be made of the branch secretaries. G. J. Angell, W. G. Osmond, C. W. Joyce, K. W. Hoffman, W. Webb, A. C. Blackwood, J. V. Knight, and J. A. Courtney put the resources of their branch headquarters at my disposal, answered inquiries promptly and frankly and lent
Preface

further assistance in a variety of ways. In some cases branch assistance with accommodation considerably lightened the burden on the University of my field work.

During travels in which every State except Western Australia was visited a host of sub-branch officials provided me with information and hospitality. Particular thanks are due to the leaders of the Caboolture (Q’land), Batlow (N.S.W.), Mitcham (Victoria), and Marion (S.A.) sub-branches who undertook distribution of questionnaires to their members and who accepted the financial burden of such distribution. Mention must be made of other individuals, like J. Brooks, J. D. Westwood (and his wife Ella), R. G. V. Pearson, E. H. Smith, J. Moore, and Mrs M. Nicholls, who began as informants and ended as friends.

At governmental level acknowledgement must be made of the co-operation of R. W. C. Swartz who, as Minister for Repatriation during the period of my research, made himself available for interviews, ensured access to departmental material, and made possible visits to the Northern Territory and New Guinea. In addition, help was given by F. O. Chilton, Chairman of the Repatriation Commission; K. D. A. Medbury, Director of War Service Homes; T. T. Colquhoun, Commonwealth Director of War Service Land Settlement; C. H. Costello, ex-service organization nominee on the Repatriation Commission; R. G. Kelly, Secretary of the Repatriation Department; R. J. P. Daffy, Assistant Repatriation Commissioner for Legislation; T. J. Kelly, Director of Repatriation Legislation and Research; J. H. Greenwood, Deputy Repatriation Commissioner for New South Wales; and B. J. Lyne, his counterpart in Queensland; A. E. Brown, Director of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission; J. J. Dedman, former Minister for Postwar Reconstruction; and M. Nash, Press Secretary to R. W. C. Swartz. F. Coleman, as ministerial press secretary and later public relations officer for the Repatriation Department, frequently went beyond the call of duty in his assistance.

The research for the thesis on which this book is based was carried out with the financial assistance of a three-year Australian National University Scholarship. The work was
Preface

done from the Department of Political Science in the University's Research School of Social Sciences. I owe particular thanks to Dr G. E. Caiden for supervision. I must also thank Dr B. D. Graham, who gave me considerable help before his departure for England, and Professor R. S. Parker, Dr C. A. Hughes, Dr D. W. Rawson, and Professor K. S. Inglis for advice at various stages and for comments on the final draft.

The author is, of course, solely responsible for any misstatement of fact and for any errors of interpretation.

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### Abbreviations

#### A General
- **A.I.F.** Australian Imperial Force
- **A.C.T.** Australian Capital Territory
- **A.L.P.** Australian Labor Party
- **B.C.E.L.** British Commonwealth Ex-services League
- **B.E.S.L.** British Empire Services League
- **C.M.F.** Commonwealth Military Forces
- **C.P.D.** *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*
- **C.P.** Country Party
- **C.P.S.** Commonwealth Public Service
- **R.S.L.** Returned Sailors' Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia
- **R.S.S. & A.I.L.A.** Returned Sailors' Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia
- **U.A.P.** United Australia Party

#### B Journals
- **A.J.P.H.** *Australian Journal of Politics and History*
- **A.P.S.R.** *American Political Science Review*
Contents

Preface vii
Abbreviations xiii
Introduction xix

Part I  THE HISTORY OF A PRESSURE GROUP
1 Formation and Consolidation, 1916-1919 3
2 Domestic Conflict in a Pressure Group, 1920-1929 25
3 Crisis Over Tactics, 1930-1939 49
4 The Impact of War, 1939-1945 70
5 Toward a Tactical Compromise, 1946-1965 86

Part II  THE ANATOMY OF A PRESSURE GROUP
6 Structure 109
7 Decision-making 130
8 Direct Tactics 146
9 Indirect Tactics 166
10 Assessment of Effectiveness 186

Part III  CONCLUSIONS ABOUT A PRESSURE GROUP
11 Conclusions 205
Appendixes

A  Proposed R.S.L. Political Party Policy and Platform  229
F  R.S.L. Members’ Opinions—Questionnaire Data  243

Notes  245

Selected Bibliography  264

Index  279
Plates

Anzac Day March, Sydney

Frontispiece

Between pages 130 and 131

Delegates to the first R.S.L. Congress, 1916

W. M. Hughes addressing the R.S.L. Federal Executive, 1919

R.S.L. National Presidents

W. M. Hughes being carried along George Street, Sydney, 1919

R.S.L. National Headquarters, Canberra

R.S.L. National Executive, 1965

R.S.L. National Congress (1965) in session

New South Wales Congress (1965) in session

R.S.L. War Veterans’ Home, Myrtle Bank, S.A.

City sub-branch R.S.L. Club, Canberra

National President Sir Gilbert Dyett with three National Secretaries, 1927

A meeting between Sir Robert Menzies and Sir George Holland

xvii
## Cartoons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Trappers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Job He Left Behind Him</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bag-Snatcher</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Ticket</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Said Soldiers</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diggers</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Letter Day</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widows' Weeds</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Casualties</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Corners</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigby and an R.S.L. Protest</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Few terms can evoke as many contrasting reactions as the three letters 'R.S.L.' Few organizations have been as consistently controversial as the Returned Sailors' Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia.*

Australia's largest ex-servicemen's organization has long been the subject of bitter attacks and impassioned defence. Numerous charges have been hurled at the R.S.L. and its leaders and it has, at one time or another, been at odds with political parties, labour unions, business associations, and religious groups—to name only a few. To some people the R.S.L. has always meant the 'local R.S.L.'; the club, beer-swalling and poker-machine playing, and the boozy hypocritical observance of Anzac Day. Young Hughie, in Alan Seymour's play, The One Day of the Year, complains:

It's just one long grog-up . . . a lot of old hasbeens getting up in the local RSL and saying . . . we're here to honour our mates who didn't come back. And they all feel sad and have another six or seven beers.†

The League has been branded as a militarist, war-mongering organization, out of touch with changes in Australia and abroad; criticism has sometimes included allegations that the League is reactionary, even fascist, with its actions and policies dictated by 'brass-hat' ex-officers.

The words of defence have been equally strong. The activities of the R.S.L. have allegedly typified Australian 'mateship', community service, and the commemoration of lost comrades and loved ones. The charge of militarism has been met with the claim that a returned servicemen's organization is a legitimate spokesman on matters affecting Australian security. The League's supporters have long defended

* In October 1965 the League decided to adopt 'Returned Services League of Australia' as it's official name.
† Reproduced with the permission of Angus and Robertson Pty Ltd and the Author.
The Politics of Patriotism

it as a patriotic guardian, dedicated to the defeat of all creeds subversive of the Australian way of life and as an enduring example of the fabled equalitarianism of the first Australian Imperial Force.

Opinions have always been extreme. Critics and defenders have seldom found common ground. The bitter arguments over the Australian Broadcasting Commission’s ‘Four Corners’ programme of September 1963 pointed to the breadth of conflicting opinion.\(^1\) A sub-branch president in Victoria complained that

> we saw no shots of the true picture—no war veterans’ homes or ‘Darby and Joan’ cottages maintained by the League, no contingents of blood donors, no entertainment for disabled ex-servicemen in mental and other hospitals.

The editor of *The Anglican* newspaper criticized as an ‘unqualified social evil . . . those grog and poker machine haunts euphemistically termed “R.S.L. Clubs” ’. This comment was accompanied by an allegation that the affairs of the League were controlled by ‘racketeers who have insinuated their way into the top strata of the movement’.\(^2\) Similarly, while some R.S.L. leaders claimed that the A.B.C. feature had presented a ‘deliberately planned, misleading, slanted, vicious, and sneering picture’ of the organization, one member of Parliament argued that

> The outburst confirms the impression that the R.S.L. has become a conservative and bureaucratic organization dedicated to the preservation of values no longer valid. The real spirit of Australian servicemen and ordinary branch members is being submerged by phoney campaigns on Communism and National Service Training which have nothing to do with the League’s real purpose.\(^3\)

On yet another occasion, in a cartoon dealing with the Australian Army, Petty, cartoonist for the *Australian*, depicted the League as an elderly sot, beer glass in hand, watching the luring of Australian soldiers to their deaths and calling for ‘more’. This view of the R.S.L. as a drinksodden, militaristic pressure group was strongly opposed. A
correspondent asked the newspaper's editor: 'Would it not be more honest to portray the R.S.L. as it really is—an organization continuously working for the welfare of ex-servicemen and their dependants?'

There is at least some part of the truth in most of the conflicting statements about the R.S.L., for the organization carries on quite different social, benevolent, and political functions in the community at the same time. Its image among different groups seems to depend largely on the activities which receive the most publicity and on those with which particular groups are most concerned.

The R.S.L. is a welfare or benevolent body. Almost all of the financial resources of the League are devoted to providing direct welfare assistance to returned servicemen and their dependants, assisting them to secure repatriation benefits from government authorities, and participating in a variety of community projects. The League's branches and sub-branches provide a network of welfare agencies which effectively cover the country, a fact which prompted a former Repatriation Minister to remark that 'If there were no R.S.L. to take care of the bereaved and disabled, one would have to be created.'

As part of its direct welfare activity the League provides homes for aged ex-servicemen and women and their families. The Victorian branch, in 1964, provided housing for 473 persons while the New South Wales branch maintained War Veterans' Homes, complete with medical facilities, at Narrabeen and Yass. Queensland had an establishment at Caboolture, South Australia one at Myrtle Bank, West Australia homes at Mt Lawley and Faversham, and Tasmania several smaller establishments. The Australian Capital Territory branch also operated a home for elderly war veterans and smaller institutions were to be found financed by some sub-branches. During the last few years every branch and many sub-branches have commenced building 'Darby and Joan' cottages for elderly ex-service couples.

The League's direct welfare programmes take many forms. R.S.L. branches and sub-branches arrange funerals for indigent ex-servicemen and for widows, make provision for
food and clothing for needy persons, distribute ‘Christmas Cheer’ gifts during the holiday season, and provide cigarettes and similar items for ex-service hospital and mental patients. Some of them subsidize family and child welfare agencies and medical clinics. The organization in New South Wales maintains a modern neurological diagnostic centre and every branch has, over the years, provided employment agencies. As an example of branch activity, New South Wales, in 1963, dealt with some 2,509 cases in its social welfare section. It provided 567 funerals, 497 food and clothing orders, and surgical aids for 54 cases. Some 313 accommodation problems were solved and 812 matters involving legal advice were referred to the League’s panel of solicitors. Arrangements were made for placing 165 aged and ill persons in hospitals and homes, while 2,850 Christmas Cheer gifts and grants were made. The Central Council of Women’s Auxiliaries in New South Wales raised the total of its contributions to the Northcott Neurological Diagnostic Centre to £92,422 while the total of loans from the League’s co-operative building society was increased to £4,700,000.

The record for other branches was similar. In South Australia 1,523 people applied to the League for welfare assistance. New South Wales continued to take the lead in the organization of youth clubs—with a total of 36,000 children enrolled—while the other branches began to follow the same course of action.

The League also provides a great deal of welfare assistance through voluntary efforts by individual members. Every sub-branch arranges hospital visiting and the branches take a lead in ensuring entertainment for ex-service mental and other hospital patients. Groups of blood donors are organized, wood cutting parties arranged, houses painted for widows, and a myriad of similar tasks performed. In 1965 the Tumut sub-branch in New South Wales built a house for the widow and children of an aboriginal returned serviceman.

The League has always been involved in welfare activities at the general community level. The organization is always represented on community projects and welfare bodies and in recent years has conducted such successful charitable
Introduction

appeals as that for distress victims of the *Voyager* disaster and the ‘door-knock’ side of the Churchill Memorial Appeal.

At the same time the R.S.L. is a social organization. It provides entertainment and sporting facilities for members and associates. Virtually every Australian community has its ‘R.S.L. Club’ or R.S.L. clubrooms. Even though a minority of the League’s sub-branches are connected with a licensed club, social activities play a very large part in all sub-branches. One of the R.S.L.’s main objectives has always been ‘to perpetuate the close and friendly ties of friendship created by mutual service in the wars of the British Commonwealth’, and to this end recreational facilities have always been present at the sub-branch level. Clubs have varied greatly in size and luxury; but whether enjoyed through the sharing of a keg of beer after a monthly sub-branch meeting in a corrugated iron hut built by R.S.L. members in an outback town, or in a palatial club where poker machines and beer revenue have provided swimming pools, squash courts, and bowling greens, ‘fellowship’ (as it is euphemistically described by most service clubs) is an integral part of the League.

The R.S.L. has also always been a political pressure group, deeply involved in attempts to influence the decisions of Australian governments at national, state, and local levels. It has tried to be a ‘non-partisan’ body, avoiding involvement in the party process or attempts to take over the reins of government, but it has always been very ‘political’. The impetus behind federation of the separate branches in 1916 was a desire to improve their ability to influence Commonwealth government policies and decisions. Attempts to influence the actions of the Commonwealth continue to demand most of the resources of the League at the national level. Indeed, the issues with which the League is now concerned have changed little since the organization’s formative years, with two general subjects dominating the R.S.L.’s political activities. The League has always been primarily concerned with the treatment of ex-servicemen and with the preservation of Australian security. Emphasis on individual matters within each category has varied periodically but the major categories (in League terminology ‘repatriation’)
The Politics of Patriotism

and ‘national affairs’) have always remained the same. The term ‘repatriation’ has long been used in Australia to refer to the whole scheme of compensation and benefits provided for ex-servicemen by government. This terminology was adopted at a time when virtually all of the country’s military forces were serving abroad or had already returned from overseas service. Attention was concentrated on the needs of persons who were to be repatriated to the Commonwealth or who could already be described as ‘repatriates’.

Provision for the care of these persons did not, however, come in the form of a single piece of legislation and was not administered by a single department under the aegis of a single minister. Instead, while the Commonwealth assumed general responsibility for repatriation, benefits were provided under a series of Acts, administered under different government departments. The Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Act gave the Repatriation Department, for which it made provision, control over some aspects of ex-service treatment while other parts of the repatriation system were administered from within other departments and, in some cases, by state government agencies. As a result one must distinguish between use of the term ‘repatriation’ (with a small ‘r’) by which reference is made to the entire system of benefits, and ‘Repatriation’ (with a capital ‘R’) which refers to the department administering one part of the system.

The Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Act was first passed in 1917 (the name was later altered to simply ‘Repatriation Act’). Its provisions were extended to World War II veterans in 1943 and later to persons with service in the Korean, Malayan, and similar limited conflicts. The department administers compensation to both ex-servicemen and their dependants in respect of the incapacity or death of the ex-servicemen. Parliamentary responsibility for the department is held by a Minister of State for Repatriation, a portfolio which has existed since 1917, except for a period between 1923 and 1929 when repatriation was made the responsibility of a ‘Minister-in-Charge’ and not accredited with the status of a full portfolio. The portfolio has sometimes been held jointly with another. The department is headed by a commission
of usually three but up to five persons, the members appointed for five-year terms, with the chairman (who is appointed by the government and not elected from amongst the incumbent commissioners) having a seven-year tenure and being officially designated as the permanent head of the department under the Commonwealth Public Service Act. One of the other two members is selected by the government from a list of three names submitted by ex-service organizations throughout the Commonwealth. Administrative continuity below the Repatriation Commission is provided by a secretary.

The department administers the general and special rate disability pensions, service pensions, and pensions to widows and other dependants. It maintains the largest hospital system in Australia, artificial limb factories, and centres for prosthetic and other types of rehabilitation. It has been responsible for the administration of various educational benefits and business re-establishment loans.

An appeal system is provided which includes independent tribunals responsible for the final determination of eligibility for benefits under the Repatriation Act. The tribunals are of two types, with some responsible for appeals against pension assessments and the others for appeals against the failure to concede entitlement. One of the members of each is a nominee of Australia's ex-service organizations, selected by a procedure similar to that applicable to the ex-service nominee on the Repatriation Commission except that members of entitlement tribunals are appointed by the Governor-General, whereas members of assessment tribunals are appointed by the Minister for Repatriation.

Under the War Service Homes Act, 1918-64, provision is made for housing assistance to veterans of World War I, World War II, Korea, Malaya, and some subsequent conflicts: enlisted, appointed for, or employed on active service outside Australia; who are married or about to marry or who have dependants for whom it is also necessary to maintain a home. Widows of such persons are also eligible ... and certain other categories of persons mentioned in the Act.

The eligibility provisions, it will be noted, are narrower than
The Politics of Patriotism

is the case under the Repatriation Act. The department builds homes for sale to eligible persons, arranges and supervises the building of homes on land provided by eligible persons, and lends money for the erection and purchase of homes.

The scheme has never been given the status of a full portfolio, but has been the responsibility of a series of 'Ministers-in-Charge' who have with a very few exceptions been the simultaneous holders of other portfolios.

The scheme was first administered by the War Service Homes Commission under a single commissioner appointed by the government and after World War I administration was decentralized to state government instrumentalities in Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, and Tasmania. Since World War II the Commonwealth has retained full responsibility (except in Western Australia) and the scheme has been administered as a division of first the Department of Works and Housing, then Social Services, then National Development, and presently the Department of Housing. At all times the War Service Homes Division has operated independently under a director who, subject to ministerial political direction, functions like a permanent head of a department.

Soldier settlement. After a series of conferences between state and Commonwealth government representatives during World War I, a Commonwealth suggestion of an agricultural settlement scheme financed and administered at Commonwealth level for the benefit of ex-servicemen was rejected by the states. The states were unwilling to sanction the scheme and claimed sole control over any soldier settlement scheme by virtue of their constitutional control of lands. The result was that the responsibility and control of soldier settlement were vested in the state authorities and the Commonwealth government undertook to lend moneys to the States for settlement purposes up to an amount not exceeding £675 (later extended to £1,000 per settler). The states were not acting as agents for the Commonwealth in the scheme but as principals in their own right, though with Commonwealth financial assistance.8
Introduction

Some aspects of the soldier settlement question did come under Commonwealth supervision, however, by virtue of the latter government's control of tariffs, agricultural subsidies, and such other aspects of agricultural policy as affected settlers.

The problems encountered with the World War I scheme led to serious consideration of the form which any soldier settlement scheme should take following World War II. The matter was investigated by the Rural Reconstruction Commission and after negotiations between the states and the Commonwealth, the War Service Land Settlement Act, 1945, was carried. The Act provided that the governments of New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland would find the necessary funds to acquire and develop land and to provide credit for settlers and retain policy control of settlement, while the Commonwealth would undertake the training of settlers, living allowances during each settler's initial period on the land, and an obligation to share equally with the states any losses which might be incurred from soldier settlement. In the other three 'agent states' the Commonwealth was to provide all the finance while the states administered the scheme under Commonwealth supervision.

At the Commonwealth level the responsibility for soldier settlement has rested with the Minister for Primary Industry and his predecessor, the Minister for Agriculture. The scheme has been administered from a War Service Land Settlement Division, under a director, from within the Primary Industry and Agriculture Departments.

As can be readily seen, the major issues at the Commonwealth level with regard to soldier settlement have always been financial.

War gratuities. After both World Wars I and II the Commonwealth government has provided a gratuitous payment to war veterans. In both cases payment has been made in the form of an interest-bearing bond, maturing some years after the cessation of hostilities. Responsibility for these payments has rested on both occasions with the Commonwealth Treasurer, with administration from within specially created sections of the Treasury Department, and with distribution
assistance from specially appointed boards with representation from returned servicemen's organizations.9

Preference. A further benefit for Australia's war veterans has been the provision of preference over non-servicemen in appointments to various positions. After World War I a wide measure of preference was accorded in appointments to both permanent and temporary positions in the Commonwealth Public Service. The preference provisions were administered by the Commonwealth Public Service Commissioner and later the Commonwealth Public Service Board, both of which reported to Parliament through the Prime Minister.

After World War II preference was provided over a wider range of positions under the Re-Establishment and Employment Act, 1945. A Department of Postwar Reconstruction was created under a minister by the same title, with a Director-General of Postwar Reconstruction as permanent head. The provisions of the Act applied to appointments both within and outside the Commonwealth Public Service. The Act was limited in its application, however, and after some extension, lapsed on the grounds that the power justifying it had been based on the immediate need for postwar reconstruction. Some preference was subsequently available under the Commonwealth Public Service Act, but this, except for some general provision of preference in retrenchment, has largely ended. (The Re-Establishment and Employment Act also provided schemes for re-training and education of ex-servicemen, but such features of these schemes as now remain are under the aegis of the Repatriation Department.)

National affairs. Ever since its formation, the R.S.L. has evinced concern with matters affecting Australian security. The League has put to the Commonwealth government demands with regard to defence, immigration and creeds and organizations seen as subversive to the maintenance of the Australian way of life. Representations on these matters have been directed towards the departments and ministers responsible for Commonwealth activity in these fields, as well as to the Prime Minister. While always secondary to concern with repatriation (with the possible exception of a short period
Introduction

eyearly in World War II) representations on these matters have been an integral part of R.S.L. activity.

The League's public image reflects the three-part nature of the organization's activities as well as the fact that its political activities often take it out of the arena of ex-service-men's affairs and into matters of general importance to Australia. The R.S.L.'s 260,000 members make it not only the largest war veterans' organization in Australia, but also one of the country's largest voluntary associations. With 2,000 sub-branches located in every state and territory, and headquarters at state and Commonwealth level, the League is certainly before the public eye. It would indeed be remarkable if the organization did not come in for a great deal of public attention in any case. As it is, the League's social and political activities make it the subject of a considerable amount of hostile criticism. In addition, because it is a returned servicemen's organization, and thus uniquely connected with some of Australia's strongest traditions, one can see how it must take a pre-eminent place in public controversy.

Despite the interesting nature and unquestionable importance of the R.S.L.'s social and benevolent activities, the organization's political role is eminently a subject for serious study. This role has been the most controversial side of the League. Attempts to ensure the maintenance of generous treatment for returned servicemen have always provoked some criticism from persons who believe that ex-service claims against public money are excessive and over-emphasized.

However, while most of these critics have conceded the League the right to make claims in this area, the organization's activities on matters not solely pertaining to repatriation have come in for a great deal of comment and criticism. Where the leaders of the League have claimed a double legitimacy based both on the right of any group to involve itself in matters affecting the well-being of Australia, and on the special rights which they feel have accrued to war veterans because of their patriotic service, others have questioned the right of ex-servicemen to any sort of privileged status on matters not of specific reference to war veterans. They have argued that a returned servicemen's organization
The Politics of Patriotism

should limit itself to consideration of repatriation matters. In this book an attempt is made to provide an objective and detailed examination of R.S.L. public activities over a period of fifty years. The decision to concentrate on political affairs as well as on matters at the national level reflects the impracticality of any attempt to cover League activity with reference to a multitude of local governments and eight state and other governments. (For purposes of the R.S.L. constitution, the Australian Capital Territory and Papua-New Guinea are considered to be states.) It can be further justified on the grounds that the Commonwealth government has long accepted primary responsibility for the care of ex-servicemen as well as for national security.

In some measure then, this book will provide a history of the R.S.L. as a national organization. This, however, is not its primary purpose. Rather it is designed as an attempt to present a detailed picture of a single important Australian pressure group, revealing its motivations and methods, and weighing its success.
Part I

The History of a Pressure Group
Formation and Consolidation
1916-1919

Australia entered World War I with a flush of patriotic enthusiasm which moved Andrew Fisher (then campaigning as leader of the Labor Party and soon to be Prime Minister) to offer Britain 'our last man and our last shilling'.\(^1\) Widespread evidence of the same sentiment prompted the Governor-General to report to the King that so far as the war was concerned 'There is indescribable enthusiasm and entire unanimity throughout Australia.'\(^2\) Indeed, with no prompting from the government, the rush to enlist provided fifty thousand soldiers by the end of 1914.

After the beginning of the new year, however, the situation changed. The tide of recruitment slackened considerably and some of the enthusiasm for the war flagged. The original situation was momentarily restored by the news from Gallipoli, but by the second half of 1915 the Commonwealth had officially recognized the need to campaign for recruits. Campaign programmes were organized from July 1915 and were conspicuous for their appeal to emotion. An observer wrote:

> In the interval at a dance a wounded soldier would stand up and ask for mates; on a surfing beach the sun-baskers would hear the voice of the recruiter. . . . It might be a returned V.C., a crippled officer, a wounded man from the military hospital, the Premier of the State, the Lord Mayor. . . . Sometimes it was one of that day's recruits.\(^3\)

Posters depicted German soldiers attempting to rape and bayonet women and children. Together with the decrease in the number of recruits came a fundamental change in attitudes towards the war. The epic news from Gallipoli certainly caused a surge in the number of recruits, but the
casualty lists from the peninsular campaign and the news of the bloody battles in France just as certainly tarnished the gilt on the trappings of war. Particularly for the women, the war came to mean more than an emotional good-bye and a lonely but temporary separation.

However, if there were changes in outlook towards the war because of the mounting casualties, it was the issue of conscription which brought these emotions into the open and which laid bare differences of opinion about Australia's role in the war which had been submerged by the patriotic fervour of 1914. Indeed, the same emotional outlook, although no longer unanimous as to cause, contributed to one of the bitterest internal divisions in Australian history. Reliance on the voluntary system had met with some criticism from early in the war and by the end of 1915 demands that men be forced to fight were current. They linked up with insistent requests for reinforcements from the British military authorities and a declining rate of voluntary enlistment, to prompt Fisher's successor as Prime Minister, William Morris Hughes, to break with his own party and call a referendum on the subject of conscription.

The campaign which followed the official announcement in August 1916, and that before the 1917 referendum, were in part an extension of ones which had been conducted with increasing ferocity from late 1915. The same emotional appeals as marked the recruiting campaigns were adopted by both sides and resulted in the division of Australia into two hostile camps. The 'win-the-war' group, which favoured conscription, thereafter viewed all anti-conscriptionists as something akin to traitors, while, to the ardent anti-conscriptionists, those in favour of compulsory overseas service seemed close to being murderers. The conscription issue split the Labor Party, revealing a division which originated in the deeper division between the many who were for, and the few who were against, the war; and it grew with the increase of antipathy to Mr. Hughes' determined methods for winning the war. It gathered volume with every step that was taken before the third quarter of 1916 to increase the
Formation and Consolidation

adequacy of Australia’s contribution to British strength in the war.⁴

Sectarianism was injected into the fray by the activities on the ‘No’ side of Archbishop Mannix, even though some Catholic bishops supported the ‘Yes’ campaign. Ethnic differences came forward because of the anti-conscriptionist activities of many Irish-Australians. In addition, labour union opposition to conscription combined with the severe industrial trouble which disrupted the war effort in 1917 to bring into the open feelings of suspicion and even hatred that have never really been dispelled; and it was in this charged atmosphere that the R.S.L. was formed and its policies established.

On 6 June 1916, representatives from the separate Returned Soldiers’ Associations of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia met in Melbourne to draw up a provisional constitution and statement of aims and objects for the formation of an Australia-wide body. During four days of meetings they confirmed the tentative arrangements which had been made at an informal meeting in Sydney on 10 May 1916, and set the stage for the first Federal Congress⁵ of the R.S. & S.I.L.A. in Brisbane from 11 to 16 September 1916.

The Returned Soldiers’ Associations had sprung up in 1915 out of the Returned Soldiers’ clubrooms provided by public subscription with the help of patriotic organizations.⁶ The clubrooms provided a gathering place for men invalided from the war and, while originally social in purpose, provided the foundation for associations with practical aims. The early ex-servicemen found that they faced many problems, and it was primarily a desire to ensure adequate treatment of their disabilities which prompted establishment of the various Returned Soldiers’ Associations.⁷ The War Pensions Act of 1914 made provision for the payment of pensions but the rates were inadequate and the administrative system was inefficiently divided between the departments of Treasury and Defence. In addition, there were no facilities whatever for medical rehabilitation treatment after discharge from the forces.
The Politics of Patriotism

When the Association representatives met in June 1916 they were unanimous in their belief that it was the duty of the Commonwealth government to provide for the repatriation of the A.I.F. volunteers. The Commonwealth government had already demonstrated its willingness to assume responsibility in this field by its prompt passage of a War Pensions Act, and, in addition, was making generous promises as part of its recruiting campaign. The soldiers' discussions were laden with references to the need to ensure that the promises made to them on enlistment were fulfilled. In addition their attitude reflected an Australian propensity to look to the state for activity in hitherto undefined fields, and the feelings which had already led to age and invalid pensions and workmen's compensation legislation. The belief that it was the duty of the Commonwealth to care for the needs of returned servicemen indicated the Australian assumption which has been pointed out by numerous writers, that

the organs of government and their concomitant institutions, like the party system, exist not to frame national policy but to execute the expressed demands of the community as formulated in practice by organized bodies claiming to interpret the general interest correctly.⁸

Two alternatives were discussed by the leaders of the various Returned Soldiers' Associations. It was suggested by some that a political party should be formed, but this idea was rejected by an overwhelming majority. It was decided instead that the League should be a non-partisan pressure group which would attempt to influence government from outside the party-political and electoral arena. This was a decision which reflected fear of involvement in the widening split within the Labor Party and between the Labor Party and the groups which were to form the National Federation. It also illustrated the conviction common to ex-service organizations in many countries⁹ that the interests of ex-servicemen should be placed above party politics. In the R.S.L.'s case, the decision to remain aloof from the dividing influences of the electoral arena was confirmed in 1918 after overtures from the Returned Soldiers' and Citizens'
Formation and Consolidation

National Federation (more commonly known as the Soldiers' National Political Party)\(^\text{10}\) prompted the drafting of a political party platform and manifesto by officials in the League's federal headquarters. These new suggestions of electoral activity were hastily suppressed in 1918, as they were on the infrequent later occasions when one branch or another saw fit to put them forward.

Although repatriation was given priority in their early discussions, the returned servicemen were also vitally concerned with questions relating to the prosecution of the war. Their activities must be viewed against the backdrop of Australian politics during World War I. The political and social controversy of the period had a crucial effect on the aims and objects of their organizations. Hence while determined to keep the League from party political involvement, the early leaders decided that it was undesirable that the organization should be pledged to a non-political stand. Such a provision had been placed in the original draft constitution but it was removed at the founding Congress after discussion which reflected the growing controversy over conscription and the development of a 'win-the-war' group in Australia. The non-political ideal was criticized because it was thought to preclude discussion of matters which were believed to be of national importance. The leaders of the League saw a clear distinction between involvement in 'party politics' and involvement in matters affecting the well-being of Australia. While pledging themselves to remain neutral on all questions of party politics, the leaders of the League laid down their intention to take part in discussion of 'national' affairs. Specifically, they were then concerned with achieving a 'Yes' vote on the conscription question and with ensuring orientation of the country toward a 'win-the-war' policy. This distinction between 'party politics' and 'national' has continued in the League to the present day. It was used to justify support of the Nationalists during World War I—indeed, the acceptance by the Federal President, Lieutenant-Colonel W. K. Bolton, of an invitation from William Morris Hughes to run for the Senate under the Nationalist banner was sanctioned for the same reason. Bolton's activity as a senator was not
The Politics of Patriotism

THE TRAPPERS.

From The Worker, Brisbane, 12 Dec. 1918

8
Formation and Consolidation

questioned until after the war had ended. The same justification was used, by the end of the war, to cover League activity with regard to defence, immigration, and organizations seen as subversive to Australian interests. Opposition to the activities of persons then popularly called Bolsheviks grew up between 1917 and 1919 and stemmed from the withdrawal of Russia from the war after the Revolution and from the disruptionist activities of various factions in Australia. All repatriation questions, it was believed, should be kept out of party politics entirely. Matters affecting Australian security should transcend party political differences.

Decisions about the membership of the new organization reflected the wartime situation. Even though some of the state associations had received valuable assistance from civilians during their formative stages, heated references to 'eligibles' (persons who were of eligible age but who had not enlisted) and 'indispensables' (persons who were in the armed forces but who had been classed as indispensable for home service) effectively ruled out inclusion in the new organization of persons who had not actually left Australia for service overseas. The League was to be a returned servicemen's organization, composed of men who had proved their patriotism by war service.

A policy of non-sectarianism was adopted without argument and, while it was decided that nothing was to be gained from a constitutional provision, it was made clear that military rank was not to be a factor in the new organization. Indeed, it was decided amongst delegates to the early conferences that no reference to rank should be made in the League unless a man was an active serving member of the armed forces.

Determined as the leaders of the League were on the necessity to persuade the Commonwealth government to provide generous treatment for returned servicemen, they were not at first conspicuously successful in their efforts. The initial years were largely devoted to placing the R.S.L. on firm foundations. They formally complained about the inadequacy of the pensions system and protested against the principle of the government-sponsored voluntary efforts in the
The Politics of Patriotism

rehabilitation field, but the acceptance by the Commonwealth of the responsibility for all aspects of repatriation reflected more the exigencies of the recruiting and conscription campaigns, and the predilection of the government and public generally to accept the principle that the Commonwealth should step into this new field, than R.S.L. pressure. The League itself laid little claim to success, and the Federal President complained to the 1918 Federal Congress that in the initial stages of the Repatriation Act [of August-September 1917] and contrary to the promise of the Prime Minister, this League was not permitted to have very much say in determining the character of a law so vital to the interests of returned soldiers. During the passage of the Bill opportunity was taken of placing your views before Parliament ... but they obviously did not exercise much influence in shaping the character of the Bill subsequently brought down...12

This lack of direct success was doubtless due in part to the fact that the leaders of the League had, to that point, little experience in the exertion of political pressure. In addition, however, it strongly reflected the organization’s early domestic problems. Hughes had warned the leaders at the outset that he could not promise them anything until they had ‘put their house in order’13 and could demonstrate effective domination of the returned soldier movement. The League did not meet this standard until 1918.

At the first Congress in Brisbane the New South Wales Association refused to affiliate with the new federal body, arguing that the equal representation provisions insisted on by the other states were unfair inasmuch as they meant that New South Wales would be subsidizing weaker and poorer Associations. The Association’s leaders soon had cause to regret this decision, however, and after the R.S.L. had conducted a campaign within the state and threatened to form a separate branch, the New South Wales group entered the League. Their decision was prompted by internal disputes, legal problems resulting from the secretary’s conviction for misappropriation of Association funds, and declining member-
Formation and Consolidation

ship. Indeed, when they agreed to enter under a modified form of proportional representation in May 1917, the need for the latter had disappeared.

Although no Tasmanian delegate had attended the June 1916 conference, the Association in that state had affiliated at the first Federal Congress. To bring the West Australian A.I.F.-Returned Soldiers' Association into the League presented a somewhat more difficult task. The West Australian group sent observers to the early meetings of the League but refused to affiliate. When the League's General Organizer, W. Burns, returned from a visit to the western state, he reported:

I found the feeling in West Australia to be one of indifference as regards our federation. It was not considered that the Federation of the Returned Soldiers' Association could be of any direct or important benefit to the West Australia returned soldiers, and their financial position did not justify the expenditure as a piece of philanthropy.14

As Burns's report indicates, the West Australian Association was a well-organized group. It had seventy sub-branches before it finally came into the League in 1918. It had early been granted a measure of official recognition by both state and Commonwealth governments. The Association was able to boast in 1918 that it had been able to press its nominee for Deputy Comptroller of the Repatriation Department on the Commonwealth government—a degree of success which seems to have reflected in part the fact that Senator Pearce, a Westralian, was Minister for Defence, and in part the sympathetic climate towards returned servicemen within the state. The West Australian Association president, Lieutenant-Colonel H. Pope, had no hesitation in pointing out that 'we are so comparatively fortunate. . . . Public opinion is so comparatively favourable'15 when he was negotiating with the federal body, and it is interesting to note that Western Australia gave by far the greatest majority for 'Yes' in both of the conscription referenda.16 Affiliation only came in mid-August 1918, after protracted discussion and after a decision by the Association that no liability would be incurred on
joining. The news was loudly hailed in the rest of the R.S.L. ‘Now the whole of the States are joined together’, said The Soldier (Sydney, 19 July 1918), official journal of the League in 1918, ‘there is no reason whatever that their just claims should not receive more consideration’.

In each case, the further consolidation of the League by the addition of a state branch was followed by an increased measure of government recognition. After the affiliation of New South Wales, Senator Millen, the new Repatriation Minister, announced to a meeting of the League’s Central Council that the government was prepared to give the organization financial assistance.17 In October 1918, a few months after the West Australian entry into the League, the Minister for Defence, Senator Pearce,

issued an order notifying all departments that the League was to be recognized as the official representative body of returned soldiers, and complaints coming from the League, in theory, at any rate, must have immediate attention.18

In both cases, the government’s willingness to grant the R.S.L. a measure of official status reflected the League’s increasing domination of the returned soldier movement as well as important political considerations. The government saw a need to maintain League support for its wartime policies and it also required the organization’s assistance in furthering the growing repatriation system. The R.S.L. was organized on a federal basis with units in many local communities before a Repatriation Department existed and so was a convenient device to be utilized until, and even after, a Commonwealth agency was established and functioning. This recognition of the R.S.L.’s value to the Commonwealth because of its intimate contact with a large number of ex-servicemen has continued to be an important factor in League-government relations.

The process of enlargement was accompanied by the appearance of a division over strategy and tactics which has persisted in the organization to this day. Some of the League’s leaders, led by the Federal President and successive General Secretaries, were determined that the organization should
exert pressure through officially recognized channels direct to the decision-makers at the federal level—a decision to use official channels which bears the obvious mark of Lieutenant-Colonel Bolton, a man with thirty-nine years of military experience as an active militia officer. They believed that the League would carry weight by virtue of the validity of its arguments, its status in the community, and the diplomacy with which it put its point forward. To further the organization's status, Bolton and his supporters determined to enhance the League's reputation as a 'responsible' body. In particular, they took active steps to prevent violence by returning servicemen and to avoid tactics which might embarrass the government. During and after the returned soldier riots in Adelaide on Peace Day 1918, in Brisbane in March 1919, in Fremantle in May, and in Melbourne in July of the same year, the League stepped in to try to prevent further violence and to try to persuade the returned men to channel their energies into the League. After the Brisbane returned soldier anti-bolshevik riots the R.S.L.'s 'Anti-Bolshevik Committee' organized an 'Army to Fight Bolshevism' composed of 2,000 men. The 'Army' was kept in readiness during the 1919 Eight Hour Day parade as a demonstration (said the leaders of the R.S.L.) of the discipline of the returned servicemen who had joined the League and as proof that the League was capable of maintaining discipline and law and order when the civil authorities (who were in any case connected with an anti-conscriptionist government) were not.

There were dissenters from the President's policies. They ranged in strength from those who suggested that mildly worded letters and polite deputations were inadequate (and who caused considerable argument at the 1918 Federal Congress when they maintained, over the objections of the President, that the League should include the word 'insists' in one of its requests); through those who believed that indirect pressure through back-bench parliamentarians, the political opposition, the press, and the public generally, could secure more effective results; to those who maintained that some demonstrations of violence might not be amiss. The latter were quickly overruled although the debate between
The Politics of Patriotism

the others continued. Indeed, while Bolton's point of view prevailed at first, concern about his dependence upon direct, formal, and polite methods, combined with suspicion of his political affiliation with the Nationalist Party and dissatisfaction with the limited amount of time he could devote to R.S.L. affairs because of his parliamentary duties, brought about his defeat in the League's 1919 presidential elections. His successor, G. J. C. Dyett, was nominated by Bolton's opponents in Victoria because he had achieved a reputation as a 'fighter' who was also able to bring opposing factions together during his leadership of the recruiting campaign in Victoria, and because he was not known to have any political connections. Some opposition was to form against Dyett because of his dependence on what were felt to be overly polite and diplomatic direct methods, but a significant factor in his 1919 election was the hope that he would adopt a more aggressive mien than had Bolton.

By early 1919 the League was firmly established. Its membership was rising at a rapid rate (some 1,000 per week, to reach an estimated 150,000 by the end of the year, a 50 per cent increase) and the organization had effectively captured the returned soldier movement in terms of both government and public recognition and acceptance. The League was the recipient of widespread support from the press and from numerous other organizations. The Hobart World proclaimed:

This journal is entirely sympathetic towards the R.S. & S.I.L.A. We show that by the amount of space we give to the proceedings of the local branch, and even more, perhaps, by the amount of attention we devote to soldiers' questions.

The National Referendum Council had furnished for the federal headquarters the Melbourne offices supplied by the Stock Exchange Company. Support had come from patriotic organizations like the Soldiers' and Sailors' Fathers' Association, the South African Soldiers' Association, the Australian Natives' Association, and the National Council of Women. While suspicious of or even hostile to the League because of its connection with the Nationalist 'win-the-war'
Formation and Consolidation

campaign, because of R.S.L. criticism of unions which indulged in strikes during wartime, and because of League preference policy, even the labour movement contributed to a sympathetic environment through its support of repatriation measures which would help the working man who had gone away to fight.

The League’s policies were firmly settled. The 1919 Congress, deferred for two months because of an influenza epidemic, saw the most serious discussion of policy to that time. Specially prepared briefs on soldier settlement and war service homes were considered and policy adopted. Representatives from the new Commonwealth Public Service subsections of the League presented suggestions with regard to preference. They asked the League to take a firm stand:

We in the Service hold that returned soldiers are absolutely entitled to preference. We base our argument in the first place on the fact that the keeping of the [Commonwealth Public] Service British and free did not rest with those who remained home but with those who went away to fight, and for that reason we claim preference; and secondly we claim it because it was promised to us.23

A comprehensive scheme of pension rates was drawn up and a resolution requesting some form of a gratuitous payment to returned servicemen carried. Resolutions were also adopted which asked the Commonwealth to ensure the future armed defence of Australia and to take firm action against all enemy aliens.

It was after the 1919 Congress that the League began its first major representations. It was at this time that it had its first marked success in a series of negotiations which must be viewed against the background of Federal Executive efforts to reinforce the League’s grip on the returned soldier movement, a federal general election, and an environment sympathetic to returned servicemen (as they returned to the country at the rate of 742 a day in July 1919).

The policy adopted at the 1919 Congress was forwarded to the relevant ministers immediately after the annual meeting and while some satisfaction was gained on minor points the
EX-SOLDIER: ‘What about my old job, boss? You promised to keep it open for me.’

THE PATRIOT(?): ‘Well, you see, it’s like this; the job is too ladylike for a fine big man like you. My advice is for you to go out and battle for a bit of healthy navvying.’

From The Worker, Brisbane, 3 April 1919
Cabinet was unwilling to make any important decisions until the Prime Minister had returned from the Peace Conference. This suited the new Federal President who was busy moderating the controversy which had sprung up over his election. He was satisfied to delegate to the General Secretary the responsibility of arranging matters for presentation to Hughes upon his return.

W. M. Hughes came to the federal headquarters to meet the Executive on 11 September 1919, and during this and the four meetings which followed a great deal of hard bargaining took place. From the R.S.L.'s point of view, the negotiations with the Prime Minister were not entirely successful—the leaders were refused any measure of preference in Commonwealth Public Service promotion or means of providing movement from temporary to permanent status in the Service without the necessity of examinations, and they only achieved about 75 per cent of the pension rates they requested. On the other hand, Hughes's promise that only returned servicemen would be recruited to the Service for the next two years and his agreement to a generous ante-dating of seniority more than offset the refusals. The pension rates granted were, in fact, quite satisfactory to the League, giving a totally incapacitated man with a wife and three children an income slightly above that which he would have received if employed at the basic ruling rate of the period.24

Two aspects of the policy of the League which came in for the most discussion are worth considering in detail because of the far-reaching importance of the eventual decisions. The questions relating to the control and administration of the Repatriation Department and to the gratuity were each of extreme significance in its own way.

The 1919 Congress confirmed the previous year's request that control of repatriation be vested in an independent body and again resolved to 'press for a basic alteration of the scheme by appointment of three paid commissioners to administer the scheme away from direct parliamentary control'.25 This demand had arisen as a reaction to the unsatisfactory operation of the honorary Board of Trustees set up in 1916 and the honorary Repatriation Commission established in
The Politics of Patriotism

1917. The leaders of the R.S.L. claimed that the government had approved of the new idea in principle when it appointed a paid commissioner to administer the War Service Homes scheme, but Millen rejected the suggestion when it was put to him late in 1918 and so, when an approach was made after the 1919 Congress, it was accompanied by a press release by the General Secretary. This release noted that Millen’s reply should coincide with the Prime Minister’s expected arrival from Europe and asked ‘What will Billy say?’ The Repatriation Minister, in fact, decided to let Hughes give the answer and told the General Secretary that the League could take the matter up with the Prime Minister after his return. The proposal was placed before Hughes in a letter on 5 September 1919. He was told that the League wanted

The administration of the Repatriation scheme to be vested in a paid Commission of three representative business men. One to be a returned soldier and a nominee of the R.S. & S.I.L.A. The abolition of political and ministerial control over the scheme.

When Hughes met the Executive on 11 September, he entered negotiations by stating his personal dislike of commissions. ‘These Commissioners go about as though butter would not melt in their mouths. But I have appointed Commissions and they have afterwards told me to go to blazes.’

Dyett replied that it was the League’s belief that a commission would best serve the interests of returned servicemen and that

The Commission would have the support of the returned soldiers behind it. We are not agitators but we desire a change in the management of affairs. We ask for the Board to consist of three persons . . . one at least . . . to be a nominee of the League. . . . Imagine us at present having to go before three separate Boards, which often give different and conflicting decisions in relation to the same questions.

Hughes, though admitting that he was prepared to agree with their request in principle, said that he would have to refer the matter to Cabinet. When the matter was raised at
Formation and Consolidation

the subsequent meeting he renewed his opposition to commissions in general and suggested that the Federal Executive should meet with the existing voluntary commission to discuss the whole question. Dyett categorically refused to consider this suggestion and even after Hughes revealed that he had discussed the matter at some length with Millen and that the Repatriation Minister wanted further information before committing himself, the Federal President strengthened his arguments. Negotiations very nearly broke down when he told the Prime Minister that the Executive 'must demand' that their terms be met. Hughes retorted: 'That will not be sufficient for me—that you demand a thing—this is a free country. I do not care two dons for what anyone demands. You show me what is right and I will do it.'

But despite this outburst he did agree to give the League its commission, with one proviso: 'I will give you a pledge that in the new Parliament, if I am returned to power, I will bring in a measure providing for such a Commission as is set out here.' He noted that he could never consider abolishing ministerial responsibility over repatriation but agreed that one of the three commissioners would be chosen from a panel of three names supplied by the League, thereby creating a precedent of considerable importance inasmuch as this privilege was thereafter demanded by and accorded to the League in the appointment of nearly all of the boards, tribunals, and commissions connected with ex-service affairs.

The remaining details about the commission were worked out at a subsequent meeting between the Executive and the Prime Minister, and after demanding the right to announce the establishment of the commission himself, Hughes gave the leaders of the League a last reminder: 'I have very little faith, very many doubts, and a good many reasons for doubt as to these supreme commissions. I have found them to be bowellless and merciless beasts.' He made his announcement in an election speech in Brisbane on 21 October 1919 when he told the crowd that

Since he had returned to Australia, he had frequently met the Executive of the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' League
and a great many matters had been adjusted. Its wish that a Repatriation Commission to which a soldier would be appointed, should be established in each state had been granted. The Pensions, Repatriation, and Defence Departments were to be co-ordinated in order to save overlapping and confusion. The business would be administered by a Commission of three, under the Minister.34

In mid-1919 the League learned that Great Britain and Canada had decided to pay a war gratuity to their service-men and that New Zealand was considering a similar move. The General Secretary made inquiries and discovered that the Australian authorities had considered the matter but that adoption of a gratuity had been rejected on grounds of cost. With this knowledge in hand and the sanction of Congress the General Secretary decided to launch a public campaign for popular support on the issue. Press releases were prepared and issued, claiming that ‘to withhold the gratuity from the men of the A.I.F. would be to Australia’s everlasting shame, holding it to the ridicule of the Empire’.35

Official representations were withheld pending the Prime Minister’s return from overseas and the request for a gratuity was included in the matters submitted to him by letter on 5 September 1919. When the matter was raised at the first meeting Hughes told the Executive that he had not yet had an opportunity to investigate the possibility of paying a gratuity but promised that

If it is shown that what you say is correct and that we are behind other countries I will advocate it. . . . I am in favour of Australia treating her soldiers as generously as other countries are treating theirs.36

When they met the second time he claimed that he had not yet had a chance to discuss the matter with his colleagues ‘excepting that it was brought up’37 and asked the members of the Executive for further information. Dyett informed him that New Zealand’s scheme would cost £54 million if copied in Australia (total expenditure estimated in the 1919 Commonwealth Budget was £50 million), and when Hughes
Formation and Consolidation

snapped, 'If you are going to ask me to do impossibilities I cannot do them. . . . I am not going to throw this country into chaos merely for the purpose of keeping in office', Dyett revealed that the plan envisaged by the League would cost only £15 to £17 million. The Prime Minister promised to place the proposal before Cabinet.

Before another meeting could be held the Prime Minister announced an election and by the time the Executive met Hughes on 16 October, the Labor Party had promised a cash gratuity. The Prime Minister told Executive that the Treasurer was considering the matter and that while he was personally certain of the outcome he could not commit himself to an answer before the League's next Federal Executive meeting on 28 October. He said that he would work out details with the Treasurer and announce the decision to 'the electors of his constituency at Bendigo on the 30th'. To this suggestion Dyett took exception, claiming that 'any announcement should be made to me in the presence of the Executive. . . . I do not think it is right that an announcement should be made to the soldiers except through me'. Mr Reynolds, Tasmania's representative on the Executive, told the Prime Minister that the League wanted to be a party to the announcement so that it could consolidate its position as the leading returned servicemen's organization.

Even among returned soldiers there is a difference of opinion in regard to many matters, especially between members of the League and those outside it. We of course naturally think that all returned soldiers should be members of the League. Naturally it would strengthen the unity of the League and strengthen the hands of the soldiers' Executive if they, representing the body politic of their members, are in a position to give intimation to the various State Presidents giving the results they have achieved after many months of arduous labour. . . .

Hughes, on the other hand, claimed the right to make any announcement. 'It is for me to say how I shall approach the citizens.' He revealed that he intended to make an announcement the following night in Brisbane and this caused much
The Politics of Patriotism

consternation among the Executive with feelings being assuaged only when he agreed that he would say in his announcement that the scheme was being introduced at the request of the League. When the Executive accepted this compromise he revealed that it had been decided that the payment was to be made at the rate of 1s. 6d. per day in the form of a non-negotiable, interest-bearing bond. The total cost would be £25 million, of which £7 million to £15 million was expected to be covered by German indemnities.

If these concessions to the League were made with the general election in mind then the move seems to have been a well-calculated one inasmuch as Hughes's party won a resounding victory. Relations between the R.S.L. and the Prime Minister were somewhat blighted, however, by a controversy which arose when the Victorian branch announced during the election campaign that it favoured a cash gratuity as promised by the Labor Party. Hughes asked Dyett to denounce this statement as contrary to the agreement which the Executive had made with the government, and to appear at a public meeting with him. This the Federal President refused to do, prompting Hughes to attack him in the press. The Prime Minister also strengthened his attacks on the Labor Party. He told a special campaign meeting in Adelaide that he felt he must protest against 'men . . . being made tools of . . . a political section that was against the soldier during the war and left him to die like a dog'. The final result was that while official relations between the League and the Hughes government did not suffer unduly, the Prime Minister's relations with Dyett were never very cordial thereafter. Dyett claimed that his actions had been correct inasmuch as it was the League's duty to remain neutral in party-political affairs, and afterwards told the 1920 Federal Congress:

During the last election we went through a most critical time. . . . I was fortunately able to steer a clear path. . . . There were a great many temptations to men in a neutral position. But I realized that I was the chosen leader of a body of men who had fought side by side on many foreign battlefields, and that their views being in unity on certain points, it was my bounden
duty to protect the interests of the League by standing clear of party politics.41

Hughes maintained that Dyett should have supported him inasmuch as he had granted the League's request with regard to a gratuity.

Despite this controversy, 1919 was an extremely successful year for the League; so successful, in fact, that Senator Pearce was able to boast to the 1920 sub-branch conference in Western Australia:

The Government of which I am a member, has endeavoured at all times to keep in close touch with the League, recognising that the League is the body that really represents the returned soldier. During the last election the Prime Minister got in touch with your Executive and obtained their views as to the question upon which the Government should make promises during the election, and a definite programme was set out in the Government policy as to what the Government would do in the various Departments dealing with returned soldiers. A definite promise was made that any such legislation would be first introduced and passed as soon as Parliament met. The result of the elections was that the Government was returned with a majority in both Houses, and I am glad to be in a position to say that the promise has been honoured to the full, and every one of those measures is today on the Statute Book of the Commonwealth.42

The initial period in the League's history ended in 1919 with the organization holding an undisputed position as Australia's major ex-service body. Most of the other ex-service organizations which had grown up during the war were dead or dying by this time and the League effectively dominated the field. Despite the growth of the disability-oriented organizations during the twenties, the R.S.L. was to retain its premiership. The League had grown from a number of small and parochial associations to a nation-wide organization of considerable size. It had chosen to eschew electoral activity and had proven its mettle as a pressure group by ensuring provision for the generous treatment of Australia's returned servicemen. In a little over three years
there had been a considerable amount of experimentation, and changes in both leadership and structure which were designed to facilitate the organization’s operation as a pressure group. In addition, the League’s contacts at Commonwealth government level had been tested and proved, with the organization’s most successful representations being made directly to the Prime Minister. The pattern was set for the future.
The decade following the successful representations to the Prime Minister during the 1919 federal general election was fraught with difficulties for the R.S.L. The organization was confronted by a myriad of repatriation problems, the solution of which was hampered by the unfavourable economic situation which existed even before the period of economic depression which began in 1929. In addition, the League had to fight against changes of opinion towards returned servicemen; changes which led the organization’s official historian, in 1927, to describe the time as the ‘reaction phase’ in the history of repatriation. He noted that while general public sympathy did not lapse materially there was ‘in some cases, and in some directions, a tendency to escape from or repudiate, an obligation’. Finally, there were domestic difficulties. The League’s efforts to ensure the retention and application of benefits promised up to 1919, to extend the coverage of the repatriation scheme, and to influence public policy on questions of national importance, were carried out against a background of continual internal controversy.

R.S.L. pressure group activities during the 1920s must be viewed against a growing clash within the organization over strategy and tactics, interspersed with other domestic problems. Membership posed a continuing problem and disputes based on conflicting personality and ambition were common. But these latter issues, as well as complaints by the larger branches that their opinions were not given adequate weight, tended to be drawn into a dispute over methods which had first shown itself during the League’s formative years. On one
The Politics of Patriotism

side, led by the Federal President, G. J. C. Dyett, were aligned those persons who favoured direct methods and who believed that decisions about the implementation of policy should be left to the League's federal headquarters. This group preferred that the choice and timing of representations should be left in the hands of the Federal President and General Secretary. Its members agreed that the League should, whenever possible, make its representations in a polite and diplomatic manner directly to the persons responsible for decisions at the Commonwealth government level. Opposed were those persons who believed that indirect methods could profitably be utilized. They felt that direct and diplomatic representations were inadequate and desired both greater participation by the branches in the choice of policy to be stressed, and greater use of indirect tactics. Most of the proponents of this point of view came from New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia. They came to see the defeat of Dyett as the solution to all of the R.S.L.'s problems.

The leaders of the League entered 1920 with high hopes. The previous year had seen membership rise to encompass the bulk of the 167,000 men who had been overseas when the armistice was called, and had witnessed the granting of most of the organization's requests by the Commonwealth government. Some of the optimism was well justified. The internal differences which had been present during the 1919 Congress seemed to have been resolved, and the Federal President reported to the 1920 Federal Congress that '... I have had the unanimous support of the delegates from every State of the Commonwealth.' The hopes which had been placed in the acquisition of a nominee on the Repatriation Commission had already been partly fulfilled and the first such nominee had informed Dyett of 'what, in addition to undertaking the share of administration allotted to me, I have been able to do in the interests of the League'.

But the aura of optimism was soon shattered. The Federal President's sanguine belief that 'this year the membership will be maintained if not increased' was contradicted by a year-end decrease of nearly two-thirds, to 50,000. Simul-
Domestic Conflict in a Pressure Group

The widow of a soldier who dies within three years of discharge now receives only 20s. weekly in place of 42s. under the old scale.

THE SPIRIT OF AUSTRALIA’S DEAD: ‘Stand back, Billy! This is very different to your promises when you asked us to enlist.’

From Australian Worker, Sydney, 10 Feb. 1921
The Politics of Patriotism

taneously, repatriation problems mounted. Preference cases demanded almost daily representations, employment agencies had to be established in all the branches, the pension rates payable to widows were discovered to be hopelessly inadequate, and the pensions commutation policy instituted by the government at League request was found to be so disadvantageous to returned servicemen that the League reversed its own policy. Satisfaction with the Repatriation Commission arrangements ended, and dismay was voiced when the Reverend Ashley Teece, who had been a member of the League's Federal Executive at the time of his nomination, made it clear that he did not consider himself a 'representative' of the R.S.L. or subject to League dictation. Relations with W. M. Hughes, which were never particularly cordial after the gratuity controversy during the 1919 election, deteriorated further when the Prime Minister refused to sanction the recall or dismissal of Teece. Relations at prime-ministerial level improved only after S. M. Bruce became the leader of a Nationalist-Country Party government and made it quite clear that he would continue to accord the R.S.L. privileged access.

Amidst the League's growing difficulties Dyett extended his control of the R.S.L. and its representations at the federal level and cultivated good relations with the Commonwealth government and the ex-servicemen's departments. He stressed the need to depend upon direct and diplomatic methods which avoided any possibility of antagonizing the government. He reported to the 1922 Congress that during the previous year 'almost daily interviews occurred between the Federal ministers administering the departments responsible for repatriating our Comrades, and the Federal President or General Secretary. . . .' Those who were dissatisfied with the Federal President's methods, both because they felt that they were not effective enough and because they necessitated the centralization of control in Dyett's hands, were also active, particularly during the Federal President's frequent absences overseas. In September 1922, while Dyett was attending an American Legion conference in New Orleans, and after direct representations
had been repeatedly unsuccessful, the General Secretary took indirect action in an attempt to secure some provision by which returned servicemen could be transferred from temporary to permanent positions in the Commonwealth Public Service without having to undergo an examination. His action was prompted by continuing threats of retrenchment in the temporary branch of the Service. Instead of following the usual procedure of making representations direct to the minister responsible for the Public Service Act, the General Secretary, F. E. Forrest, arranged for three representatives from the League's Commonwealth Public Service subsection in South Australia to meet in Melbourne with the members of the House of Representatives from their state. After the meeting, on the night of 5 October 1922, an amendment to Clause 83 of the Commonwealth Public Service Bill was put forward in the House by R. P. Blundell (Nationalist, Adelaide). The amendment provided

that any returned soldier who has been employed continuously for a period of not less than two years may be permanently appointed without examination if the Chief Officer certifies that the duties of such returned soldier have been performed in a satisfactory manner, and that such duties are of a non-clerical character.8

Despite opposition from the Attorney-General, Littleton Groom, and other ministers, the amendment was passed with a majority of nine.

When the government vowed to defeat the amendment in the Senate the General Secretary immediately wired all branches:

SUCCESSFUL OBTAINING AMENDMENT PUBLIC SERVICE BILL PROVIDING PERMANENT APPOINTMENT . . . STOP AMENDMENT PASSED BY REPS STOP EFFORT LIKELY TO BE MADE CUT OUT AMENDMENT IN SENATE STOP WIRE ALL SENATORS YOUR STATE INSTRUCTING SUPPORT TREAT URGENT.9

He also interviewed the Minister for Home and Territories, Senator Pearce.

On 10 October Pearce moved that the amendment be
accepted in an altered form. The new version gave an order of priority in appointment to permanent positions. The minister told the Senate:

I showed this . . . to the general secretary of the Returned Soldiers League, and he expressed himself as quite satisfied, and said that it redeems the promise given by the Government to those soldiers who went up for examination for admission into the Service.10

The new amendment was included under Clause 84 of the Bill and was carried without opposition.

In the House, the Attorney-General had to defend the government’s amendment against charges of illiberality. He pointed out that ‘the returned soldiers have approved of these alterations’, and when asked, ‘What returned soldiers?’ by M. P. Considine (A.L.P., Barrier), he replied, ‘The representative Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League.’11 The amendment was then carried without a division.

A little later when Dyett was in London attending a conference of the British Empire Services League (B.E.S.L.) in 1923, the acting Federal President, Ernest Turnbull (president of the Victorian branch) authorized a circular asking the branches to assist in a campaign against retrenchments in the Taxation Department. He asked the branches to direct their sub-branches to forward resolutions of protest to their federal political representatives. A short time later, when the government appointed V. H. Ryan, a non-returned soldier, as Australian representative on the British Empire Exhibition Commission, Turnbull adopted an intransigent attitude which precipitated an open break between the League and the Prime Minister. After the break occurred Turnbull encouraged the use of indirect tactics.

The Ryan dispute is, in fact, worth reviewing in some detail both because it demonstrates some of the strategic differences of the day and because it illustrates the contemporary attitude towards preference on the part of the League and towards returned servicemen generally on the part of large sections of the public.

The news that there were to be positions for Australians
Domestic Conflict in a Pressure Group

on the British Empire Exhibition Commission prompted the League's Federal Executive to make a routine request to the Commonwealth government for assurances that preference to returned servicemen would apply to all appointments. The government gave a standard reply to the effect that preference was its policy. The position of Australian Executive Officer at the Exhibition was advertised, forty-five persons (including twenty-three returned servicemen) applied, and the Australian branch of the Commission, headed by Senator Wilson, the Minister for Health, appointed Ryan. Ryan was a South Australian public servant who had not been amongst the applicants.

The appointment evoked an immediate protest from the League. The General Secretary wrote to the Prime Minister and to Senator Wilson. The latter notified the federal headquarters that he would not reconsider the appointment. He asked the press: 'Do you think a reasonable body like the Australian Section of the British Empire Exhibition Commission is going to be dictated to by an outside organization?' But the appointment was reviewed. Meeting at the direction of the Prime Minister, the Australian Section concluded that the appointment was justified and, in a public statement, said that they could not understand the League's attitude in view of the fact that not only was Ryan the best qualified person, but he had volunteered for active service. He had not served overseas because he had been classed as indispensable for home service by the Defence Department.

Because the Federal President was in England, the League's first official public statement was made by F. E. Forrest, the General Secretary. He claimed in a statement to the press that 'The policy of preference seems merely a sham.' Senator Wilson's remarks will cause unpleasant surprise to the returned soldiers of the Commonwealth. . . . It seems plain that he, for one, does not believe in preference being given to men who left the shelter of civil positions and took up arms in defence of the nation in time of need. . . . Nothing was . . . too good for soldiers in the war period; now nothing very good is offered them.
The Politics of Patriotism

Two days later, after consultation between Forrest and Turnbull, the federal headquarters released an attack on the government which received headline publicity. The General Secretary claimed that the details of the appointment and of Ryan's war record had been checked and that it appeared that the appointment had been 'worked for [him] by . . . Mr. Byce, M.L.C. of South Australia. . . .'

The Secretary also claimed that Mr Ryan had been classed as medically fit during World War I, had applied to the Defence Department for exemption from service, had been refused, and had then been classed as indispensable by the South Australian government. He asked the Prime Minister and the Cabinet to reconsider the facts and to annul the appointment. The issue was now being taken up editorially and, on the same day as arrangements were made for the acting Federal President to interview the Prime Minister, the Melbourne Evening Sun complained editorially that

There are disheartening signs of an attempt in certain quarters to whittle away the preference to ex-soldiers for positions in the gift of the Government. The Returned Soldiers' League is entitled to the support of every honest citizen in its efforts to secure just treatment for its members in accordance with the pledge of preference. . . .

The President and Secretary interviewed the Prime Minister and presented to him a resolution condemning the lack of 'sincerity' of the government with regard to the policy of preference. This act so annoyed Bruce as a 'slur on the honour and good faith of every member of the Commonwealth Government', that he informed the leaders of the League that 'Until this is withdrawn neither I nor any member of my Government can have any relations with the executive of the R.S.S.I.L.A.' Turnbull refused to withdraw the allegation and relations were fully and formally severed. Said the General Secretary:

As we are unable to comply with your conditions, we assume negotiations now cease; we have, therefore, no other course than to submit the matter to the arbitrament of the people.
Domestic Conflict in a Pressure Group

To the people it went! Bruce made a public statement promising that returned soldiers generally would not suffer because of the breach with their leaders. He then went on to criticize the Federal President and the General Secretary.

In the past . . . the members of the Executive of the Returned Soldiers' League have been granted special privileges enjoyed by no other section of the community. . . . They have been treated with the utmost consideration, and have never been refused an interview on any occasion. We naturally resent the fact that . . . the executive . . . passes a resolution which is personally offensive to me and my Government. The soldiers' executive . . . should not claim the right to dictate to the Government. Unless it recognizes that it can be critical without being discourteous, it cannot expect to enjoy those privileges which formerly characterised our relations.18

The federal headquarters announced that a series of public protest meetings would be held. The Melbourne Herald (26 May 1923) reported:

Branch meetings are to be held throughout the Commonwealth, and many members of Parliament have already fallen into line with members of the R.S.S.I.L.A. If necessary, they will vote against the Government on all questions affecting the welfare of returned men and the dependants of the fallen . . . .

Mr. Francis, the member for Henty, announced a few days ago that the soldiers had first claim on his support.

Unless the breach is healed immediately, the Government will have some awkward questions to answer at the party meeting on June 12.

The Evening Sun of 26 May headlined the remark of a 'digger': 'the Prime Minister's dignity is evidently more to him than the interest of 300,000 men who fought for Australia. It wasn't a question of dignity when we were in the trenches.' The same paper also ran a three-quarter page series of League protests entitled 'Diggers Rally to Fight for Life'. The feature related the circumstances surrounding the appointment of the Treasurer's brother to a Public Service position in New Guinea and printed a poem entitled 'King Bruce' which described the Prime Minister as a man from a 'robber's
cage' who was deliberately ignoring the rights of men who had fought and lived with 'Blood and Death and Slime'. In bold type the edition reproduced a League circular justifying the use of indirect tactics to force an alteration of government policy.

The extreme action of the Prime Minister would appear to be an effort to smash the power and influence of the League. The Prime Minister has not left any opening for further negotiations, and has forced us to take up a fighting attitude. . . . Organise meetings and place our case before the public. . . . The aid of every Digger is needed. . . .

This feature was matched by one in the late final edition of the Melbourne Herald which noted that 'Diggers Will Fight' and which included an article in defence of the League by H. S. Gullett, then a prominent journalist and war historian and later to be a federal Cabinet minister. (Gullett, in 1922, had unsuccessfully contested the electorate of Henty as an independent Liberal against the official Nationalist candidate.)

In the days that followed the government maintained a stunned silence, broken only by an announcement that a fresh investigation was being made of the League's allegations. The federal headquarters was asked for sworn statements substantiating the allegations about Ryan's war record. C. P. Butler, president of the South Australian branch, immediately travelled to Melbourne, met with Senator Wilson on 29 May, and handed two affidavits to him on the 31st. One of these was from Dr E. A. Johnson, a major in the Army Medical Corps, and the other from G. H. Coles, formerly a sergeant in the Adelaide Recruiting Depot. Copies of the affidavits were also handed to the press and were reproduced in full. Reported the Sun:

The doctor declares that he twice examined Mr. Ryan, and found him fit for active service, and the sergeant adds that, having been found fit for active service Mr. Ryan 'failed to attest, and exerted endeavours to obtain exemption'.

The government denied the accuracy of the League's evidence, but the material prompted Bruce to seek a settle-
ment. He asked Turnbull to meet with him and while neither party would issue a statement, the acting President and the General Secretary afterwards rejected what they claimed was an attempt to shift responsibility for the appointment from the government to the Exhibition Commission. Bruce then invited the full Executive to discuss the matter with him and at this meeting it was agreed that the League would not contest the controversial appointment of M. J. D. Page to the Superannuation Board if they could be permitted to submit further information with regard to the appointment of J. C. Morrell to a senior position in the War Service Homes Division. The government would order a further meeting of the Exhibition Commission and both parties, after the League had heard the arguments put forward by the Commission, would present their separate cases to arbitration by Senator Thomas Glasgow (Nationalist, Queensland). Glasgow would report to a meeting of all interested parties at which an attempt would be made to work out a final settlement. Bruce made it quite clear that the government’s action could not ‘be taken as a precedent ...’ and the League agreed to withdraw the resolution to which the Prime Minister had taken exception.

Glasgow (who was Queensland’s representative on the Federal Executive of the League) had several meetings with the government and the League but both sides remained adamant. Finally, when the government claimed that an alteration of the appointment at such a late date would imperil Australia’s display at the Exhibition, ‘it was agreed that the R.S.L., looking at the matter purely from the public standpoint, would accept under the strongest protest the statements of the Commission as placed before the conference by the Prime Minister’. The government responded shortly afterwards by creating another senior post on the Exhibition Commission’s staff and appointing a returned serviceman, Major Treloar (later Director of the Australian War Memorial). Although the Prime Minister denied, in reply to a question in the House, that the position had been specially created as a concession to the R.S.L. and was more important
The Politics of Patriotism

than Ryan's, the League claimed the appointment as one of its main achievements for 1923.

Each time Dyett travelled overseas during the 1920s other leaders of the League employed methods which he disapproved. Part of this movement reflected a propensity to experiment on the part of successive General Secretaries when the President's firm hand was removed from the operations of the federal headquarters. More important, however, the adoption of indirect tactics to supplement direct representations which could hardly be termed either 'polite' or 'diplomatic'—as in the Ryan case—reflected growing dissatisfaction with Dyett's leadership. In 1923 his critics felt that his approaches to the government were over-cautious. Smith's Weekly (6 Jan. 1923) asked: 'Who on earth is Dyett representing? The soldiers or the Government?' and the Victorian branch president used the tactics already mentioned in the Ryan case. In addition, his critics attempted to secure his removal from the League's most senior position. During Dyett's absence at the B.E.S.L. Conference in 1923, Sir John Monash was asked to take over the R.S.L. leadership. The approaches to Monash failed, as they had in 1919, when he demanded an uncontested election as his condition of acceptance and Dyett refused to voluntarily step down.

The early opposition to Dyett centred in Victoria—the branch that had originally been his strongest proponent. But Victoria was the branch with the greatest domestic problems and was particularly unsuited to mount any sort of effective campaign against the Federal President. It was by taking advantage of these domestic difficulties that Dyett was able to consolidate his position.

Even after the big drop in 1920 the League's financial membership had continued to decrease. It was down to less than 24,000 in 1924—under 9 per cent of the total number of Australian returned servicemen (these percentages are based on figures supplied to the R.S.L. by the Defence Department during the 1920s, and do not include the number of British ex-servicemen who migrated to Australia between the wars, and who were eligible for R.S.L. membership). The decrease affected all branches but was greatest in Vic-
Domestic Conflict in a Pressure Group

toria, which fell from 26 per cent of its potential in 1921 to 7 per cent in 1924. Only speculation about the reasons for the decrease is now possible, but it is interesting to note that it was not matched by an increase in the size of any other organization. Part of the drop would seem to have been due to the fact that men who joined the League upon disembarkation from overseas failed to renew their membership as personal responsibilities laid greater claim to their time and money. At 10s., the subscription was quite high by comparison with prevailing wages and costs. The close identification of the League with conservative political elements might also have played some part in the membership slump. In addition, however, a considerable part of the apparent fall in membership seems to have reflected not a movement away from the League but a domestic division between sub-branches and their parent organizations. Particularly in Victoria many sub-branches refused to remit the required portion of the membership subscriptions paid to them to the branch office. In some cases sub-branch leaders believed that there was a more urgent need for money for welfare at the local level. As often, however, they were motivated by a dislike of the policies of their branch leaders.

It was this membership problem which framed the background to the strategic dispute between Victoria and the Federal President, a dispute which came to a climax in early 1924. Dyett had been perturbed, upon his return from England, at both the tactics adopted by Turnbull in the Ryan dispute and the attempts to secure his replacement by Monash. And even though Turnbull denied that he had had any part in the opposition to the Federal President (Melbourne Herald, 7 Feb. 1924), Dyett took the opportunity to attack him bitterly when he accepted a Commonwealth government position which had not been advertised. He maintained that the branch president’s violation of a League policy which was designed to ensure preference and equal opportunity to returned soldiers was ‘subversive to one of the most important factors of the League’s advocacy’, and added criticism of the Victorian president’s point of view on tactics. ‘I have always avoided publicity’, said Dyett. ‘None
of my acts has ever been criticised by any Government...?26 He also claimed that Turnbull was responsible for the branch's domestic problems. The latter replied that the sub-branches supporting Dyett had no official standing because they 'had not paid any capitation fees for the last two years', and the Victorian candidate Dyett had defeated in the 1923 presidential election complained that 'the wrong man was handling soldier matters in the Federal sphere'.27 But Dyett remained the real victor for although token opposition to him was maintained, particularly when he ruled that the Victorian branch's unfinancial position with the federal headquarters precluded it from voting at the 1924 Federal Congress, nevertheless Turnbull stepped down from the Victorian branch leadership for a year, and Dyett continued to enforce his opinions on strategy and tactics. A new branch secretary, C. W. Joyce, was given, in 1926, an opportunity to introduce a more efficient method of ensuring sub-branch payments to the Victorian branch headquarters.

In fact, 1924 marked a turning point in the League's development. Membership began to rise, if only slowly, and domestic arguments at the federal level were less severe. Dyett continued to favour direct representations under his personal control: it was after a series of private meetings between him and Dr Earle Page, then Minister in Charge of Repatriation, that the objections of the Repatriation Department were overruled, a Royal Commission to investigate disability assessment was appointed, and the League was given the privilege of nominating one of its members. But progressively from mid-1924 Dyett made a conscious effort to allow some branch participation in League pressure group activities at the federal level. His new policy helped avoid internal clashes, as was demonstrated with reference to soldier settlement.

By 1924, soldier settlement debts had begun to pose an acute problem. Men who had purchased land with government assistance after the war had paid inflated prices. They found themselves caught in a financial squeeze when crop prices failed to meet the expectations based on immediate postwar values. Most of the settlers were able to struggle
Domestic Conflict in a Pressure Group

along at first (with a considerable amount of temporary
government assistance) but they were in grave difficulties
by 1924 and the R.S.L. Federal Congress of that year saw
heated demands for action by the League. Delegates decided
to ask the Commonwealth government to establish a Royal
Commission and to call a federal-state conference to discuss
ways and means of alleviating the settlers' conditions and of
reducing the disparity between conditions in the separate
states. In particular, the Commonwealth government was
asked to assume 50 per cent of the losses which had already
been written down as a result of the West Australian Soldier
Settlement Enquiry Committee report.

The Prime Minister's Department rejected the requests in a
reply that was totally unacceptable to the branches, and a
Western Australian conference of soldier settlers, at the
end of February 1925, demanded that the Congress resolu­
tions be again pressed forward. The conference also sought
permission for the West Australian branch to take a deputa­
tion before the Prime Minister during one of the latter's
visits to Perth. This permission was granted and at the
meeting the Prime Minister suggested that the deputation
should ascertain from their state government the actual posi­
tion with regard to soldier settlement finance and then have
the state approach the Commonwealth. He assured them that
'the Commonwealth was prepared to act fairly'.

At the request of the West Australian branch the federal
headquarters circularized all branches asking them to make
approaches to their respective state governments. These com­
bined efforts seem to have borne fruit for after the Premiers'
Conference in the winter of 1925 it was announced that the
Commonwealth had granted an additional £5 million toward
the writing off of portions of the loans made to the states
under the original soldier settlement scheme.

The R.S.L. claimed the concession as a major victory and
the West Australian branch secretary informed the General
Secretary (E. J. Dibdin, who had taken over the position
after F. E. Forrest's death in 1924) that

Throughout the South West of this State and the Viticultural
areas, a song of praise will be sung for the R.S.L. . . . As this
very favourable concession has occurred so soon after our recent Soldier Settlers Conference.

The self-congratulation was only momentary, however, as doubts began to arise regarding the use to which some states were going to put the concessional grant. The League desired, and such seemed the intention of the Commonwealth, that the money should be used to relieve the debt problems of individual settlers. The Western Australian Labor government, however, took a different view and the R.S.L. branch was soon warning the federal headquarters that ‘Certain influences are at work in this State, aiming at using this concession for the purposes of recouping the State for the small amount of losses already written off.’ The branch secretary said that while the branch leaders had interviewed the Minister for Lands and had been assured that their fears were misplaced, they were still apprehensive. Indeed, their apprehensions were quickly confirmed, and when the government’s policy was announced it was arranged that the branch president, H. Bolton, should travel to Melbourne for a meeting with the Prime Minister and the Treasurer. He and Dyett met Dr Page on 18 September 1925, and at the meeting Bolton laid before the Treasurer the evidence to substantiate the League’s claim that the Western Australian government was planning to use the money improperly. He also pointed out to the Treasurer that the state was going to terminate the entire soldier settlement scheme on the grounds that the Commonwealth’s concession was a final payment which precluded any further possibility of settlement. The verbal arguments were followed up with a lengthy letter setting out the complaints in detail. Dr Page promised that he would put the matter before Cabinet and so, to bolster the representations, Dyett immediately wrote a personal letter to the Prime Minister. He noted in the conclusion of his appeal to Bruce that

the Federal Congress of the League is to be held in Perth on the 9th of November, at which no doubt, the matter involved —unless satisfactorily settled in the meantime—will be vigorously discussed.
Domestic Conflict in a Pressure Group

The representations evoked immediate results. Bruce sent a personal letter to Dyett noting that 'I regret that I was under a misapprehension in this matter inasmuch as I understood that it had already been dealt with by the Treasury.' He enclosed a copy of the letter he had just forwarded to the Labor Premier of Western Australia. This missive was three typewritten pages long and threatened to cut off the financial concession so far as the western state was concerned, unless it conformed to the intent of the Premiers' Conference. The letter stated, in part:

Representatives of the Returned Soldiers' League have also stated that your Government is refusing applications for settlement from men who secured qualification certificates in the belief that the State would provide for their settlement on the land.

It is anomalous that, at the very moment when the Commonwealth had offered your State financial relief much in excess of any that you had claimed, there should be a suggestion to discontinue the concessions to new settlers. . . .

As I have already advised you, it will be necessary for the Commonwealth Parliament to ratify the proposed agreement . . . but I am sure you will realise there is a danger of its ratification by Parliament being jeopardised if the State refuses the concessional interest rates to the men who have secured the required qualifications. . . . The claims of Western Australia for special financial relief may also be prejudiced if Parliament considers the State has not dealt justly with soldier settlers.

The Western Australian government still baulked on some points but the branch was now well supported. Dyett had several more interviews with the Prime Minister and Treasurer and Senator Pearce made representations on the League's behalf to the state government. The final settlement came after protracted negotiations between the branch and the state. On 20 May 1926, the branch secretary was able to inform the federal headquarters that 'The Returned Soldiers' League in this State has undoubtedly won a very meritorious victory for old comrades settled on the land. . . .' He went on to

41
thank both yourself and the . . . President for the great help we have received from your office in making our claims and the fears of this branch known to the responsible authorities.

The pressure for assistance to soldier settlers did not end, of course, and in the midst of generally amiable internal relations Dyett and Dibdin continued to make representations to the government. It was after a series of lengthy meetings between the Federal President and the Prime Minister that the appointment of Mr Justice Pike to investigate soldier settlement debt problems was announced.

The Federal President’s policy of allowing at least some branch participation in representations to the Commonwealth government helped, for a time, to postpone further open disputes over the strategy, tactics, and government of the League. The issues under contention were still present, however, and broke into the open over the question of disability assessment.

Dissatisfaction with the methods by which pension eligibility and degree of incapacity were assessed was voiced within the League, and elsewhere, from the early twenties. Considerable disappointment was felt when the Royal Commission of 1924 failed to recommend the establishment of independent appeal boards to take over the final decision about pensions. From 1925 onwards the idea of tribunals which were independent of Repatriation Department control came to be seen by some sections of the R.S.L. as a panacea for the ills of the pensions system. But another group within the League, led by the Federal President, was suspicious of the suggestion that independent appeal boards should take over the final determination of pensions cases. The federal headquarters had carefully cultivated close relations with the officials of the Repatriation Department and with successive ministers and preferred to adhere to an informal arrangement whereby the League could constantly re-submit cases to the department or the Minister, whenever new evidence or a renewed claim seemed likely to produce a favourable decision. Dyett, in particular, was afraid that the government would insist that decisions of an appeal board be absolutely final.
Domestic Conflict in a Pressure Group

Despite vigorous criticism of a system which, it was alleged, involved appeals 'from Caesar to Caesar' Dyett remained firm. He pointed out that the existing procedure allowed 'for appeals to be submitted time and time again and very often, after perhaps half a dozen appeals, success is obtained'.

The President's strong opposition resulted in the matter being deferred by several Federal Congresses. In 1927, however, when Dyett was absent from the annual meeting and Mr E. Turnbull was in the chair, a resolution calling for the establishment of a series of independent boards to assess degree of incapacity was made part of R.S.L. policy. But the resolution was not put to the Commonwealth government in the usual fashion. Instead of the General Secretary forwarding it to the minister after Congress, Dyett approached Sir Neville Howse, the Minister in Charge of Repatriation, for personal discussions. Howse would give him no assurance that the decisions of an appeal board would not be absolutely final and when the minister promised that so long as the existing system remained in effect he would give personal attention to all cases which the League felt had been wrongly rejected at a lower level, the Federal President decided that the matter should be put aside. The decision angered the branches. It was only a few weeks before they were vociferously demanding that the Congress resolution should be put to the minister in the proper way. When the Federal President refused to take this step at least two branches decided to take the matter out of Dyett's hands by initiating its public discussion and by having it raised in the federal parliament.

The first intimation which the federal headquarters had of these moves came with a letter from E. Mattocks, on behalf of Colonel D. C. Cameron (Nationalist, Brisbane), a member of the management committee of the Queensland branch of the League. The letter revealed that

Col. Cameron proposes to move ... in the House at an early date with a view to creating a Federal Appeal Board to enable pensioners and others to appeal against decisions of the Repatriation Commission. ... He understands that such a proposal is part of the policy of the League, but has heard rumours that conflict with this.
E. J. Dibdin, the General Secretary, composed a cautious reply:

it is felt that the administration of the Repatriation Act is a responsibility of the Minister in Charge of that Department, and any move in the direction suggested may be taken as a want of confidence; consequently the greatest care would have to be taken when submitting the matter to the House, in that Sir Neville Howse, if he thought fit, would no doubt make a recommendation to Cabinet in connection with pension appeals.36

He reiterated the Federal President’s fear that an appeal board would become a final arbiter.

But the President and Secretary were not to be allowed to drop the issue and after a motion had been placed on the notice paper by Mr P. E. Coleman (A.L.P., Reid), a sub-branch president and member of the State Council of the New South Wales branch,37 asking that a select committee be established to inquire into the need for an appeal board, the minister decided to ask the Repatriation Commission for an opinion. Coleman’s motion was defeated, but it served the purpose of prompting other returned soldier parliamentarians to send queries to the federal headquarters. While the General Secretary was framing evasive replies to inquiries from two returned soldier parliamentarians, Senator Sampson (Nationalist, Tasmania) and Josiah Francis (Nationalist, Moreton), the New South Wales branch was initiating further use of indirect tactics in its own campaign. The branch secretary drafted a circular letter favouring appeal boards and asked the federal headquarters to distribute it to all members of the Federal Parliament. Dyett refused:

the circularising of Members . . . might be, in view of the policy hitherto observed by the Federal Office in refraining from adopting such a course, and specially in view of the forthcoming Federal Elections . . . considered by the Government as savouring of party politics.

This policy, which has been justified by the results achieved, is generally considered wise and desirable and any departure . . . would obviously engender unwelcome suspicions.38
Domestic Conflict in a Pressure Group

This advice, however, was ignored, and with the consent of the branch executive the secretary himself sent the circular letter to all members of the Federal Parliament and presented the federal headquarters with the accomplished fact. The branch justified its action by referring to the federal headquarters' 1923 circular asking all branches to encourage their sub-branches to pass resolutions opposing retrenchments in the Taxation Department and to forward them to their federal political representatives. To Dyett's denunciation of such 'risky methods' and his claim that 'diplomacy is preferable to indirect . . . methods when dealing with Governments . . .' Mr Stagg, the branch secretary, replied:

in view of the fact that no record can be found where the policy as laid down in Circular 72/23 . . . has been amended, my Executive considers that it was justified when you refused to circularise members, to take the matter in hand itself . . . we only acted within the policy of the League.40

Dyett, in reply, pointed out that the 1923 circular had been issued when he was attending a B.E.S.L. conference in London and claimed that

In any case there is a vast difference between Sub-branches forwarding a copy of a resolution to their Federal Members and the Federal Office of the League circularising direct to all members of the Commonwealth Parliament, which has never been done during my Presidency.41

However, this did not end the matter. Despite the President's complaint that 'the recent tactics of your Office . . . have caused me much embarrassment and only serves to prejudice rather than contribute to the attainment of our objective . . .' the New South Wales branch insisted on taking the matter further into the public arena. It invited William Morris Hughes to publicly state his views on the appeal board suggestion and circularized his statement amongst the New South Wales sub-branches. The branch executive also made a public request to Dyett for an explanation of his refusal to co-operate with attempts to implement League policy.
The Politics of Patriotism

Dyett came back strongly. He pointed out that co-operation with Hughes may place the League in an unwelcome predicament... it would... appear that the League... was affording the ex-Prime Minister a suitable opportunity... of satisfying any ill-feeling that he may have against Sir Neville Howse for his criticism of Mr. Hughes on the occasion of the recent conference of the Organisation concerned [the Nationalist Party].

He alleged that the branch’s actions could endanger ‘the League’s reputation for fair-mindedness and also... its general influence’. A few days later, in a circular to all branches, he criticized New South Wales for making public League domestic differences. In reply to the criticism that the federal headquarters had been indolent in pressing ex-servicemen’s interests he noted some recent activity.

Apart from the almost daily visits to the Repatriation Commission’s Offices and frequent telephonic conversations with members and officials thereof, and also with other Departments affecting Returned Soldiers interests and claims, the week-end visits to their homes in Victoria by the Ministers controlling such Departments, afford either myself or the General Secretary an opportunity to confer with them regarding the requirements of the League. For instance, the week-end before last I had an interview with the Minister for Repatriation, and I had an interview with the Prime Minister for over half an hour today.

The New South Wales branch was unmoved. The secretary issued a public statement defending the branch’s attack on Sir Neville Howse. This statement prompted Howse to complain to the Federal President.

I cannot understand [said the Repatriation Minister] the persistent attacks being made by the New South Wales Branch... I have always appreciated the work of the R.S.S.I.L.A. and have been deeply indebted to its officials for the ready assistance they have given me...

The Federal President had considerable difficulty convincing the Minister that the actions of the New South Wales
Domestic Conflict in a Pressure Group

branch did not represent the opinions of the entire League.

Matters now began to move to a climax. During the entire controversy all of the branches had been forwarding as many individual cases as possible to the minister for a personal decision. Howse's promise that he would personally review all cases forwarded by the League had been made known and it was hoped that by swamping him with appeals they could convince him of the necessity to institute a system of appeal boards. This tactic seems to have borne weight by mid-June and, after a tour of his electorate to assess returned soldier opinion, Howse asked Dyett to meet with him in Canberra. After the meeting the Federal President hinted that a settlement had been reached, and on 25 July the Prime Minister officially notified the League that Cabinet had decided to institute an appeal board system. He said that the decision had been made because Howse had signified that he could no longer cope with the work-load of the portfolio. The League was asked to help the minister to work out the details of the new system and the government agreed to wait until after the R.S.L.'s Federal Congress to finalize arrangements.

The New South Wales branch claimed a victory based on its tactics and was supported in this claim by the Bulletin on 10 August 1928, but Dyett was quick to take the initiative. He travelled to Sydney for the branch's annual meeting, outlined the steps which he had followed (and which, he claimed, had been responsible for the victory) and won a vote of confidence from the delegates. Although the basic dispute over strategy and the government of the League remained, public differences were smoothed over.

After Congress, a number of League recommendations for the establishment of a series of independent tribunals to assess degree of incapacity were accepted by the government. In addition, on its own initiative but with the Federal President's approval the government decided to establish a series of entitlement appeal tribunals. Legislation to provide for the two types of tribunal was passed in March 1929 and the League was given the right to nominate a representative on each tribunal.
Even though domestic harmony was momentarily restored within the League after the tribunal dispute, it soon evaporated when New South Wales charged that Dyett had not represented their interests with enough vigour during the branch’s 1928-9 dispute with the War Service Homes Division. They alleged that there ‘appears to be a deliberate refusal on your part to carry out your duty of representing the Branch Executive in matters concerning Federal Government Departments’. The bitterness of the branch’s complaints after the dismissal of seven R.S.L. members from employment by the War Service Homes Commission foreshadowed the dispute over Dyett’s leadership which was to come to a climax during the Depression. The 1920s had seen the progressive emergence within the League of two conflicting points of view about pressure group strategy and tactics and the decade ended with the Federal President firmly maintaining that his methods were the most effective and dominating the federal affairs of the League in order to ensure their use. As a result he had become the focus of a great deal of hostility. Even though the League had been extremely successful as a pressure group, the organization was riven with domestic problems and in 1929 it was apparent that an open break was imminent.
The controversy over tactics which progressively dominated R.S.L. pressure group activities during the 1920s reached a climax in the early part of the Depression. Steadily worsening economic conditions, rising unemployment, and political and industrial unrest gave an air of urgency to the organization's repatriation efforts as well as to its concern with Australian security. The Repatriation Department noted a sharp upward turn in its work-load1 and this mirrored the R.S.L.'s problems. The tempo of League pressure group activities in the repatriation field was stepped up and 1929 saw a resurgence of its concern with the activities of Australia's communists.

Dyett was again the focus of hostility and the internal dispute continued to be complicated by conflicting personal ambitions. The accession to office of a Labor government also aggravated the League's internal problems. The Scullin government, which took office in October 1929, was the subject of considerable suspicion because of Labor attitudes towards returned soldier preference and as a heritage of Labor Party policies during World War I. The Federal President was criticized by some of the branch leaders because of his close personal contacts with the Prime Minister and other leading members of the new government—contacts which were even more intimate than those which had existed during the Bruce-Page administration. These links helped to emphasize the opposition to Dyett's methods when the League began its first important negotiations with the Labor government. The R.S.L.'s domestic problems were not to abate until after there had been an open battle between Dyett and his critics and until questions affecting Australian security were felt to override parochial disputes and rivalries.
RETURNED SOLDIER: ‘These are my Testimonials.’

UNION OFFICIAL: ‘But where is your Union Ticket?’

From Herald, Melbourne, 5 May 1930
Crisis Over Tactics

The League’s access to the Commonwealth government proved not to have been jeopardized by the 1929 change of government. Almost immediately after Scullin took office, Dyett made successful representations to P. Maloney, the Minister for Markets and Transport, in an effort to secure an increase in the total allocation for war service homes construction. The minister informed the Federal President, in a personal letter on 8 November 1929, of the decision. ‘Regarding your personal representations to me,’ said Maloney, ‘I had this matter very carefully considered by my colleagues and I succeeded in arranging for an additional £50,000.’

But this evidence of the new government’s willingness to listen to the League’s representations did little to alleviate the suspicions of some branch leaders with regard to both the Labor government and the Federal President. The hostility remained, and the League’s domestic problems came to a head when the government attempted to substitute union preference for returned soldier preference. The decision was eventually reversed but the case aroused the most heated discussion of strategy and tactics in the League’s history. The branches in Western Australia, South Australia, and Victoria claimed a victory for indirect tactics. They argued that the government had been forced to back down by their vituperative protests through the press and through individual members of Parliament, and intimated that had they not taken the course they did, the Federal President might have given in to Scullin. Dyett claimed that his direct negotiations had been a crucial factor in the government’s reversal of policy and contended that the branches had merely jeopardized negotiations by their activities.

An outline of the preference case is worth recounting as an illustration of contemporary R.S.L. pressure group methods. Many of the facts can best be gained from an account prepared by the Federal President. Even considering the bias of the conclusions—it was prepared to vindicate Dyett’s claim as to the reasons for the government’s alteration of policy—it stands as something of a classic as an account of pressure group activities and their accompanying internal
problems by a participant. When reading the President's account it must be remembered that a great deal of publicity was generated in a sympathetic press by all of the branches of the League and that the government was subject to a barrage of questions and two adjournment debates in Parliament. The adjournment motions were moved by Senator

WHO SAID SOLDIERS

A Federal Cabinet meeting has been hastily summoned at Canberra today to reconsider the Government's decision to abolish preference to soldiers.

From Herald, Melbourne, 6 May 1930

Thomas Glasgow (Nationalist, Queensland) and Colonel D. C. Cameron (Nationalist, Brisbane), both men with lengthy affiliations with the Queensland branch of the League. 3

On Tuesday, the 25th March, the General Secretary was advised by the State Secretary of the Victorian Branch that he was in receipt of a report from the Employment Officer to the effect that a deputation had waited upon the Director,
Crisis Over Tactics

Commonwealth Works Department (Mr. McKennal), to obtain a promise from him that preference would be given to Unionists, and that the deputation was led by Senator Barnes, and that it was believed that an assurance was obtained, although no definite statement could be made. He also stated that, as a result, it was believed that all men would be engaged through the Trades Hall. The General Secretary advised Mr. Joyce and Mr. Witton that, as a Federal Executive Meeting was to be held on the 27th (two days later), he would suggest that Mr. Holland bring the matter forward then.

After items on the agenda had been dealt with by the Federal Executive on Thursday, the 27th March, I remarked to Mr. Holland that I understood he desired to make some statement concerning the information received in connection with preference. Mr. Holland thereupon rose and very briefly referred to the matter, and, as he was unable definitely to state that the information was authentic, I suggested that he should write me a letter as President, embodying the information concerned, and no inclination for a ‘display of strength’ (these are his own words . . .) was shown by him. On the contrary, he readily agreed to my suggestion, which was unanimously approved by the Executive, vide item No. 24 of the minutes of that meeting, which indicates that the matter was to be referred to the Prime Minister.

On Monday, the 31st March, a letter was received from the Secretary of the Victorian Branch, which, incidentally, was dated the 28th March, supplying particulars regarding the said deputation.

On Wednesday, the 2nd April, representations were made to the Prime Minister by letter, and the Victorian Branch advised by the General Secretary in his reply of the 2nd April that such action had been taken.

On Friday and Saturday, the 4th and 5th April, I interviewed several important persons who were in the position to advise me of possible developments.

On Thursday, the 10th April, a letter was received from the Victorian Branch, dated the 8th April, enclosing a tender form received from an anonymous person, showing the alterations resulting from the alleged assurance mentioned above. This letter merely stated ‘the form would seem to indicate that there are grounds for believing that the Department is not giving preference to Returned Soldiers.’
The Politics of Patriotism

As the letter to the Prime Minister had not been answered, owing, apparently, to its being re-addressed to him at Sydney, where he was engaged in connection with the various financial and other important statements made about that time, I wired the Prime Minister on Friday, 11th April, requesting an interview in Melbourne, as I understood he intended visiting Melbourne during the next week. The General Secretary rang the Secretary of the Victorian Branch advising that the Federal President was endeavouring to arrange an interview with the Prime Minister.

On Wednesday, the 16th April, I interviewed the Prime Minister and discussed the matter with him for some considerable time, and, before leaving, I handed him the whole file, including the altered tender form, which action on my part he seemed to appreciate.

On the afternoon of the same day, a letter was received from the Victorian Branch dated the 15th April, in which a request was made for the result of my interview with the Prime Minister, which request, of course, confirms the General Secretary’s telephone intimation. . . . The Victorian Branch was advised of such interview and that the whole of the file had been left with the Prime Minister, who was making enquiries, and, further, that on his reply being received, the Victorian Branch would be sent a copy thereof.

On Thursday, the 17th April, I again interviewed the Prime Minister, who, despite other appointments necessitating his leaving the Commonwealth Offices, readily agreed to see me, when we discussed the matter for about three-quarters of an hour. Before leaving, I asked the Prime Minister to refer my representations to Cabinet on Tuesday, the 29th April, on which day, he informed me, it was to meet, the Easter holidays preventing an earlier meeting.

On Friday, the 18th April, I left on private business for Queensland, and, feeling that my compulsory absence in that State might jeopardise the result desired, I went by aeroplane to Brisbane from Sydney on Saturday, the 19th, and returned to Sydney by aeroplane on Monday, the 21st, where I had several important interviews, with the object of having a helpful atmosphere created at the Cabinet meeting. I returned to Melbourne on Tuesday, the 22nd April, and, subsequently, had many interviews and telephone conversations with those
Crisis Over Tactics

whom I felt could contribute to the success of my representa-
tions.

On Tuesday, the 29th April, I rang the Prime Minister, reminding him of our understanding, and renewed my earnest appeal that the clause giving preference to Returned Soldiers should be restored to the tender form concerned. He told me that he had referred the matter to a Sub-Committee of the Cabinet, whose report he expected to receive on the Wednes-
day morning.

On Wednesday, the 30th April, a letter was received from the Victorian Branch asking whether a definite statement had been received from the Prime Minister. The General Secretary wrote to that Branch to the effect that an understanding had been arrived at between the Prime Minister and the Federal President (he was referring, of course, to the impending consideration by the Cabinet), which, needless to say, could not be revealed, and, at the same time, stated that the Prime Minister’s reply would probably be received on Thursday, 1st, or Friday, the 2nd May.

Despite this information, a report appeared in the Melbourne ‘Herald’ that afternoon, commencing ‘A Bombshell was flung into the deliberations of the Victorian State Council of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers’ League during a meeting at Anzac House this morning,’ etc., and preceded by a sub-
heading, ‘Soldiers will fight to the last ditch for rights.’ It is almost unnecessary to state that I took a very grave view of this palpably inopportune announcement, especially as the Prime Minister was given to understand by me that the matter would be treated as ‘strictly confidential’ pending the decision of the Cabinet being conveyed to me.

On Thursday, the 1st May, a letter was received from the Victorian Branch dated the 30th April, asking that the Federal President interview the Prime Minister without delay, and requesting an interview for Mr. Hopkinson with the Federal President to-morrow, viz., the 1st May, or the day on which the Prime Minister’s reply was expected, previously mentioned. As intimated above, two interviews with the Prime Minister had already occurred, and the result of the Cabinet’s con-
sideration of my representations was expected at any moment.

On that afternoon Messrs. Holland (President), Hopkinson, and Joyce (Secretary) interviewed at the Federal Office the Hon. Federal Treasurer, the General Secretary, and myself. A
general discussion occurred, during which I reiterated that the Prime Minister's reply would probably be received that day or the next day (Friday). I also expressed profound regret at the untimely announcement in the Melbourne 'Herald' on the preceding day, as it was not only embarrassing to me, owing to the possibility of the Prime Minister feeling that I had committed a breach of confidence, but felt that it would seriously prejudice the anticipated success of my representations. Mr. Holland declared emphatically that he intended resorting to publicity in the Press, and I appealed to him, as did my colleagues, that that action be not taken, at least until I apprised him of the Cabinet's decision, which, you will understand, simply meant waiting a few hours or until the next day at the most. Mr. Holland refused to accede to my request, and, after I pressed him for an answer to such question, reluctantly admitted that he had already issued a statement for publication in the Melbourne 'Herald' that afternoon. In all sincerity I informed Mr. Holland and his colleagues that I felt that the announcement in the Melbourne 'Herald' on the previous day (Wednesday, the 30th April) would probably militate against the success of my representations, as such revelations at the most delicate stage of the negotiations was most undesirable and extremely unwise for obvious reasons.

They left the Federal Office at about 4 p.m., and between that time and half-past 4 I was advised on the telephone by the Prime Minister's Secretary that the Cabinet had decided to grant preference to soldiers who were members of Trade Unions. Within five minutes of receiving that advice I dictated an urgent wire to State Presidents, commencing with 'following negotiations, etc.,' and suggested the advisability of holding a meeting of the Federal Executive on the 9th May, or a week after they would receive such telegram.

On Friday morning I despatched to them another urgent wire, advising certain action by Sub-branches, and on Saturday morning, the 3rd of May, I sent a further urgent telegram to them, advising certain action by kindred organizations.

On the 2nd May I also wired the Prime Minister repeating the appeal made during my interviews with him concerning the preference clause.

On Sunday, the 4th May, I had many telephone conversations and several interviews, which induced me to decide to go to Canberra to interview the Prime Minister, which
Crisis Over Tactics

occurred at 11 a.m. on Monday, the 5th May. . . . the result of my negotiations on that occasion . . . included . . . preference in dismissals. This arrangement, needless to say, afforded gratifying relief to many of those whose dismissals were pending.

An extract from the Prime Minister's announcement in the House of Representatives on Wednesday, the 7th May, reads:—

'. . . the Government has agreed to Captain Dyett's earnest appeal to retain the soldiers' preference clause intact. . . .' . . .

. . . the above particulars prove conclusively that those at the Federal Office took advantage of every opportunity to have readjusted an unwelcome development, simultaneously retaining the confidence of the Prime Minister and his Government, so essential to the success of future negotiations on behalf of ex-members of the A.I.F. and the best interests of the League.4

Whatever the deciding factor in the government's decision to reverse policy, both sides within the League were certain of the justice of their points of view and the dispute brought the League's domestic problems to a head. Both Western Australia and Victoria redoubled their efforts to oust Dyett. Western Australia claimed that 'It was the vigorous protests from the branches rather than any action on the part of the Federal Executive, that brought Mr. Scullin to his senses.'5 The Victorians argued that

if suitable action had been taken when the Victorian Branch first brought the complaint under notice and a display of strength had been then given, there would have been no endorsement, or part endorsement of such an ill-advised amendment. . . .6

Both, together with South Australia, were highly gratified when Dyett once more announced that he would not accept re-nomination to the presidency. H. B. Collett, president of the West Australian branch, immediately wrote to all branches soliciting support for 'creative and vigorous leadership' by

a figure in the National life of Australia, to whom we may look for guidance on matters of policy . . . who will not be expected to preside over the Executive or engage in routine work, but

57
He wanted someone who could lend prestige to the League's pressure group activities while not taking over centralized control of its operations. He blamed the R.S.L.'s membership problems on Dyett and claimed that about the year 1927 . . . the Federal Executive had ceased to function . . . the principal aims and objects of the League had fallen into disuse; and . . . the whole control had passed into the hands of one man.

He recalled that as early as 1928 he had complained that 'we [are] approaching to stagnation and consequent retrogression' and had tried unsuccessfully to persuade Dyett to resign. He had even then suggested that an eminent ex-serviceman should be invited to take over the leadership of the League. 'We have reached that stage in our history [he said in his 1928 Presidential Address]—as with the British Legion and the late Earl Haig—in which we need renewed vigour, fresh inspiration, and higher leadership.' He had put forward Sir John Monash as a likely candidate but Dyett refused to step down. The following year Dyett had announced that he would not stand for re-election and this had encouraged Collett to go to the 1928 Federal Congress with a suggestion that Monash be unanimously invited to accept the leadership of the League. But at the annual meeting the Federal President had announced that because a majority of the branches had asked him to stand again, he had bowed to their wishes. Since Monash would not contest the position, the Western Australian plans had crumbled.

The bitter remarks about Dyett's decision to re-nominate in 1929 were nothing compared with the storm which arose when he repeated this procedure in 1930. Collett complained that 'it is difficult to imagine anything more likely to injure the prestige of the League in the eyes of the public. . . . Mr. Dyett has been misled by his friends.' Dark hints about a connection between irregularities in the election to select representatives for the 1929 B.E.S.L. Conference and support
given Dyett by some branches were circulated. So also were charges that the reason the Federal Capital Territory was given branch status in 1928 was to secure Dyett's re-election.

At the 1930 Congress Dyett was opposed in nomination by the South Australian Branch President, Mr F. J. McCann. Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia were pledged to cast both of their ballots for McCann, and one Tasmanian delegate voted for the South Australian against his branch's instructions. These seven votes were aligned against two each from New South Wales and Queensland, and one each from the Federal Capital Territory and Tasmania. Dyett cast one vote in his own favour to tie the score and the General Secretary, as returning officer, cast the deciding ballot to elect him. The uproar was immediate. Collett complained about the 'unedifying spectacle of a president throwing dignity to the winds and securing his own re-election by exercising a casting vote in his own favour. . . .' He demanded that Dyett step down immediately in favour of Sir John Monash and pointed out that the branches opposing him represented two-thirds of the membership of the League. He also argued that the F.C.T. (later the A.C.T.) branch should not have been able to vote, and threatened a lawsuit. Dyett's supporters, in retaliation, commenced legal action against the Tasmanian delegate who had voted against his instructions.

For a time it appeared as if the dispute between Dyett and his critics might have done the League irreparable damage. However, the conflict proved to have been a climax in the League's domestic relations and the controversy slowly abated. Dyett's critics despaired of bringing about the changes they desired in the government of the League and some of them gave up active League work. Turnbull had already cut many of his connections with the Victorian branch and 1931 was McCann's last year as president of South Australia. Stagg left the employment of the New South Wales branch in 1931 and Collett resigned from his West Australian position and entered the Senate in 1933. Brigadier-General Brand, whom West Australia put up in a final effort against Dyett in 1932, also went into federal politics. The strongest of his remain-
ing opponents, G. W. Holland, did not officially "bury the hatchet" until 1938, but the strength of the Victorian branch hostility waned after 1931.

On the other hand, while those who had criticized the Federal President for so long had not been able to secure his removal from the League's highest position, they had been at least partly responsible for a change in the organization's pressure group methods. The violent criticism, the exigencies of the Depression, and evidence of increasing concern with matters affecting Australian security, all seem to have prompted tactical concessions by Dyett. He began to sanction employment of the same indirect tactics which he had earlier denounced. Branch participation at the federal level began to increase. There were still criticisms of the Federal President's propensity to keep negotiations on a personal and private level between himself and specific ministers, but they were not as heated. The 1931 campaign to prevent a reduction in war pensions saw the situation quite changed.

Rumours that a reduction in war pension rates was being considered by the Commonwealth were current in mid-1930 and aroused considerable concern amongst R.S.L. leaders. After several inquiries from the branches the Federal President thought it necessary to contact the Prime Minister. Scullin immediately issued a press statement in which he made his opposition to any such reductions clear and unambiguous.

It will come ill from the community as a whole to propose a whittling down of these pension rights rather than make up our minds to bridge the deficit by the means which the Government has indicated. After all, a pension for partial or total disability, even if the recipient be drawing a substantial income from other sources, can hardly compensate for loss of limb or other disadvantages. Is there one member of the community not drawing a pension of this kind who would willingly change places with an injured soldier for the sake of a pension. The insidious propaganda that is now going on against these men . . . is not worthy of the high tradition of Australians.

There were, nevertheless, quarters from which a demand for
Crisis Over Tactics

economies through reduced social service benefits was steadily voiced and when, in September, rumours of a reduction once more began to circulate, Dyett felt the need to make personal representations to the Repatriation Minister. He afterwards informed the branches that

MINISTER REPATRIATION HAS JUST ASSURED ME MATTER HAS NOT BEEN DISCUSSED CABINET AND THAT THERE IS NO FOUNDATION FOR SUCH RUMOURS STOP MR ANSTY FURTHER STATED THAT IF PROPOSAL WERE MADE HE WOULD NOT SUPPORT IT STOP THESE ASSURANCES CONFIRM THE ATTITUDE PRIME MINISTER. . . .12

Although it had long been League policy to oppose any suggestion that pension rates should be tied to an economic index, some of the branch presidents were, by early 1931, having second thoughts about the maintenance of an obdurate stand against all reductions. Some of them thought that a reduction was inevitable and that the League should take advantage of the situation to score a publicity coup by volunteering a reduction. But the Federal President, with the personal assurances of the Prime Minister in hand, asked that a firm policy against all reductions be maintained. Even after strong press speculation that Scullin had been forced by Cabinet to accept the principle of a pension reduction, Dyett asked all branch leaders to uncompromisingly resist any suggestion that a reduction was necessary. He assured them that while he had momentarily feared that 'certain propaganda and other developments resulting in almost irresistible pressure' might have forced the Prime Minister's capitulation, he had contacted Scullin and had been assured 'his attitude war pensions unaltered'.13

He was sure that reductions could still be avoided if an uncompromising attitude were maintained. He pointed out that support was beginning to come from other organizations and that he had been notified that the Queensland branch of the Partially Blinded Soldiers' Association had resolved:

That all ex-soldiers be requested irrespective of the Soldier's political opinions to undertake that at the next election he will record his vote against any candidate, State, Federal or Muni-
The Politics of Patriotism

principal, who has supported or advocated the reduction of pensions, War or otherwise.

By March 1931, the Federal President was meeting with ministers and other parliamentarians nearly every day and when the Federal Executive held its regular meeting on 20 March 1931 in Canberra, he reiterated the desirability of his being given a free hand. A motion was passed resolving 'that the Federal President be empowered to take any action calculated to preserve the existing conditions with regard to war pensions'.

Action was needed almost immediately, for the Premiers' Conference was scheduled to meet in May to make final arrangements for the emergency financial measures. In an attempt to counter the reduction proposals that had been put forward, Dyett asked Scullin for permission to address the meeting. This was given and when he was introduced by the Prime Minister he told the Premiers that while

The League appreciated the grave situation and the economic crisis . . . special consideration should be given to war pensions. There were approximately 10,000 soldiers out of employment. . . . The pensions had not been increased for a number of years. . . . He asked conference not to touch soldiers' pensions until every other avenue had been exhausted. If there was any other way of saving the position without affecting the soldiers' pensions he thought it ought to be followed. . . . War pensions should be considered sacrosanct as a natural corollary of the promises made by the people both during and subsequent to the war.

Despite this plea, the conference accepted the Copland Committee suggestions and decided that in principle a reduction in war pensions was warranted.

In an attempt to counter the Premiers' decision Dyett adopted indirect methods. He sent coded telegrams to all branch presidents, asking them to have resolutions passed opposing reductions and to arrange a press campaign on the basis of these protests. He evidently believed that the time for circumspect methods had passed, and the branches agreed.
They gave him immediate co-operation. Indeed, some of them had been making their own arrangements in anticipation of just such a request. The New South Wales branch had already prepared a circular asking its sub-branches to make their parliamentary representatives aware that they would ‘not countenance any interference in War Pension privileges or benefits’. A few days later, Dyett contacted the branches once more and asked them to send a telegram to their own premiers as well as to all returned soldier Cabinet ministers in the Commonwealth government. They were also asked to maintain ‘CEASELESS ACTION . . . IMPLORING FEDERAL MEMBERS SENATORS YOUR STATE EXEMPT WAR PENSIONS . . . TO CREATE NECESSARY PSYCHOLOGY PARLIAMENTARIANS . . . ’ It was also suggested that they should make contact with ‘LOCAL KINDRED PATRIOTIC BODIES’ and encourage them to make separate protests to federal parliamentarians.

The urgency of the situation finally prompted the Federal President to call a special meeting of the Federal Executive. He notified the branches and then contacted the Prime Minister by telephone to ask for definite information on the government’s intentions. Scullin informed him that while he was still opposing a war pension reduction, pressure in Cabinet was becoming overpowering. In the light of this information Dyett contacted the president of the Federal Capital Territory branch, Mr R. Rowe. He instructed Rowe to maintain an uncompromising stand in public but informed him of the order in which he would prefer that reductions were made once they could no longer be avoided. Rowe was to let the government know of these priorities only when such a course of action seemed absolutely necessary. The Federal President also telegraphed all branch presidents instructing them to contact once more all of their federal parliamentary representatives before leaving for the Federal Executive meeting.

The Executive met in Melbourne on 17 June 1931, at the same time as a meeting of the Tubercular, Limbless, and Partially Blinded Associations was held in Canberra. Dyett’s actions up to that time were endorsed (although only Rowe was aware of the priorities he had already established) and
The Politics of Patriotism

The resolution of adamant opposition to reductions was carried. A copy of the motion was immediately dispatched in a circular letter to all members of the federal parliament and it was decided that further representations should be made in Canberra. The General Secretary and Mr W. J. Stagg, secretary of the New South Wales branch, were hurriedly sent to the capital with instructions to join the Victorian branch secretary, Mr C. W. Joyce (whom Dyett had dispatched the previous day) in an endeavour to bring together the various representatives of Soldiers' Organisations already in Canberra, with a view to inducing them to refrain from interviewing the Commonwealth Treasurer and to await the arrival of the Federal President.

The President and Rowe were to travel to Canberra the following day. The Prime Minister was notified of their impending arrival.

Rowe and Dyett left by rail on the 18th and were met in Goulburn that evening by a Commonwealth vehicle which took them both to Canberra and which delivered the Federal President to the Prime Minister. The following morning a meeting of the R.S.L. leaders then in the capital was held at which Dyett, mentioning nothing of his meeting with the Prime Minister, insisted that the League should stand alone in its negotiations with the government. This wish was overruled, although in deference to the President's wishes, he was authorized to interview Scullin alone, before a general deputation met the Prime Minister. The Federal President then went to a meeting with Scullin and Theodore, the Treasurer, while the other League representatives met with representatives from the disability organizations.

A full deputation composed of representatives from all groups met the Prime Minister in the afternoon and Scullin immediately suggested that a reduction should be made but that the returned men should be able to determine where the cuts would come. Dyett agreed and carried the others with him in a compromise which had obviously been pre-arranged between the Prime Minister and himself. The result was the establishment of a committee with Professor L. F.
Crisis Over Tactics

Giblin (a returned serviceman) as chairman, two representatives of the R.S.L., and one representative from each of the other ex-service organizations. The committee's task was to devise means of effecting a saving of £1,291,000 from the Repatriation budget. The only restriction on the committee was that it could only effect a saving of £181,000 by means other than direct pensions reductions. The report was to be submitted to the government by 2 July 1931.19

Majority and minority recommendations and a dissent from the chairman were presented to a meeting of the various ex-service organizations concerned on 1-2 July. Giblin dissented from all of the recommendations because both sides had agreed to effect the reductions by paring the pensions paid to widows and dependants without touching the basic member's pension. At the joint meeting the groups concerned agreed upon a basic reduction figure of 22½ per cent and the final report was presented to the Prime Minister late on 2 July. The outlined economies fell some £281,700 below the required figure; however, Scullin agreed to accept the recommendations with the proviso that the government could make the additional savings if such became necessary.

Although the problem had been settled to the satisfaction of the government there were still domestic difficulties to be resolved. Dyett's sudden acceptance of the compromise agreement brought upon him the anger of the Queensland branch president, R. D. Huish. Huish was annoyed because, while he had earlier suggested that the League might score a valuable propaganda victory by volunteering a reduction, the idea had been opposed by the Federal President. He had, as a result, maintained a strong campaign against reductions, even while not personally in favour of the policy.20 He now wanted to know 'who authorized this volte face?' and prefaced his question by pointing out that 'on 17th June it was “no reduction” [while] . . . . On 19th June the Committee itself offers to find the full amount required by reductions in war pensions.'21 Dyett replied that the establishment of a committee had been suggested when the Prime Minister could no longer prevent some measure of a reduction in pensions. He said that he had decided that if reductions were inevitable
then it was desirable that the League should have some control over them. He maintained that he had made the proper decision in special circumstances and had been empowered to do so by the Federal Executive.22

The campaign against a reduction in war pensions proved to have been a turning point so far as the methods of R.S.L. pressure were concerned. Dyett never altered his preference for direct tactics controlled by the Federal President, but he began to sanction the occasional use of other methods and to allow greater branch participation in the government of the League. The League's full access at Commonwealth level continued after Lyons took office and in most important repatriation matters the General Secretary continued to lay the basis of representations by formal letter and telephone, with the main effort centred in his or Dyett's personal approaches to various ministers. For example, it was after several personal meetings between the Federal President, the Prime Minister, and Josiah Francis, the Minister in Charge of War Service Homes, that the Commonwealth decided to lower the interest rate on housing loans to returned servicemen.

With reference to your personal representations . . . , [said Francis in 1933] I am pleased to inform you that the Government has given careful consideration to the matter and has decided to reduce the rate charged from 4½ per cent to 4 per cent.23

Similarly, during efforts to secure a restoration of the pre-Depression repatriation measures, emphasis was placed on personal representations to the Prime Minister by the Federal President. The government's decision, in 1936, to restore eligibility for permanent appointment to the Commonwealth Public Service under Section 84 (9) (c) to men whose employment continuity had been broken by the Depression, followed upon personal representations by Dyett, and it was to the Federal President that the concession was announced.24

But at the same time he sanctioned greater use of indirect methods. In 1933, after the League's long-standing request for some form of pension to compensate for the generally
debilitating effects of war service was once more rejected out of hand by the Repatriation Department, the Federal President asked the branches to mount a publicity campaign. The following year, when William Morris Hughes became Repatriation Minister, the League’s publicity campaign and publicity from press articles by Hughes’s former private secretary and long-time confidant, P. E. Deane,25 combined to assist Hughes in overcoming the objections of a Repatriation Commission which had long been ‘rowing its own boat’ and had been subject to a minimum of ministerial direction.26 The ground was laid for the service pension legislation in which the government recognized that war service could cause premature ageing, that ex-servicemen could lose the power to earn through the intangible effects of war service, and that war service could have contributed to the contraction of tuberculosis even though the disease could not be connected to an actual occurrence during war service.

Actually, as far as the League was concerned, 1931 marked a turning point in more than methods alone. Not only was there increased use by the Federal President of the tactics so long advocated by some branch leaders, and increased participation by the branches in the government of the League at the federal level, but after 1931 there was a substantial upward swing in membership. Although there had been a sharp upward movement in 1929, the 1930 gain had been slight and there was a fall in 1931. During 1932, however, the situation improved considerably and by the end of 1933 membership reached 50,000. This was the first return to the 1920 level and the increase continued—to reach 82,000 by the outbreak of war in 1939.

There was also, from 1931, a great build-up of interest in matters affecting Australian security and it was this, as much as anything else, which reduced the intensity of the domestic strife which had characterized R.S.L. pressure group activities from the end of World War I. Throughout the 1920s the League had made periodic written requests to the Commonwealth for increased defence expenditure and had protested against most of the economy measures that affected Australia’s military capacity. The question of immigration had been
The Politics of Patriotism

judged more important to Australian security, however, than defence, and more emphasis was given to support of the White Australia policy and British (preferably ex-service) immigration. Indeed, more emphasis was given to moves for world disarmament than to representations for Australian defence. As far as immigration was concerned, a xenophobic fervour had accompanied protests against an alleged ‘influx of aliens’ from south-east Europe. Many R.S.L. sub-branches had wanted immigrants from the latter area excluded under the terms of the White Australia policy.

Questions related to immigration lost much of their immediacy as the onset of the Depression virtually halted the movement of new citizens to Australia. Some of the fervour of feelings against non-British persons was transferred to a protest against American films, and there was a resurgence of interest in immigration near the end of the decade. Very largely, however, concern with defence supplanted both immigration and the short-lived 1929-30 interest in anti-communism, in the affairs of the League. Requests for greater expenditure on defence, greater development of Australia’s strategic capacity in terms of air fields, fuel supplies, roads, and settlement, and compulsory military service followed closely upon the 1929 announcement of the suspension of universal military service and the other subsequent cuts in defence expenditure. It was not until after 1932, however, that defence was felt to warrant more than the usual written representations to the Commonwealth. The 1932 Congress saw defence assume increasing prominence and ended League support for ‘world peace’ movements which had been evident earlier. In April 1933, immediately after Japan’s withdrawal from the League of Nations, the federal headquarters sent a circular letter on defence to all members of the Federal Parliament. The politicians were asked, ‘in view of recent world events . . .’ to support ‘the necessary steps to provide an adequate Defence Force’.

The results were far from encouraging, but this utilization of a tactic which Dyett had specifically condemned during the 1928 appeal tribunal dispute with New South Wales illustrated the change which had occurred within the League. Thereafter, while representa-
Crisis Over Tactics

tions on matters affecting Australian security were made initially by letter, and occasionally through personal contact, the greatest emphasis was given to indirect methods. As defence became an obsession with the League and conscription was seen as a panacea for the nation's security problems, there were attempts to make defence a matter of such public importance that the government would have to take notice.

The decade ended with the nation again at war and the League more united than it had been at any time since the end of World War I. Most of Dyett's more vigorous opponents had left the League and the sting had gone from the criticism of the others. Increased branch participation at the executive level had combined with more frequent sanction of indirect methods on repatriation matters to reduce the criticism directed at the Federal President. So also did the campaign for increased defence measures, since it was almost entirely a public campaign in which the branches could adopt as aggressive an approach as they desired. The old controversy still remained, but less severe. Dyett, who had been knighted in 1935, was secure in his position, and the League's internal problems were solved in camera at Executive meetings instead of in the press.
The Impact of War
1939-1945

The outbreak of World War II guaranteed the R.S.L. a new lease of life. Questions about the organization's future became academic in face of the certainty of an influx of younger members, and domestic differences paled by comparison with the importance of furthering the war effort. A hastened tempo of R.S.L. activity was demanded and even the most ardent critics of the Federal President were at first satisfied by the increased branch participation resulting from the large number of new problems facing the League.

Initially, the R.S.L. concentrated on matters directly related to the prosecution of the war. In a manner reminiscent of World War I, the leaders of the League pressed for single-minded support of a 'win-the-war' campaign by all sections of the community. They had already decided informally that the urgency of events demanded that their own differences should be at least temporarily deferred and they urged a similar policy on the rest of the country. Delegates to the 1940 Federal Congress, after observing a debate in the House of Representatives, passed a resolution calling for the sinking of party differences in a national government. Mr L. A. Robb, president of the New South Wales branch, went as far as to declare:

If we cannot get a National Government in which all political parties will work together for the national good, we had better have a dictator Prime Minister. If his policy is an all-in policy to win-the-war, I believe the Returned Soldiers League will support him.¹

Even though some Labor Party members demanded an inquiry into the 'subversive statements'² of what they alleged
was an R.S.L. 'fifth column', the leaders of the League continued to demand a government which, for the period of the war, would be oriented single-mindedly towards ensuring victory. The call for a national government was reiterated on several occasions. For example, in early 1941, the South Australian branch asked the Federal President, in an urgent telegram, 'TO URGE ALL PARTIES OF THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENT TO MAKE EVERY ENDEAVOUR ARRANGE IMMEDIATE FORMATION NATIONAL GOVERNMENT THEREBY ENSURING COMPLETE UNITY WAR EFFORT'. In addition to calling for a national government, the League criticized all activities which appeared to be not in conformity with a unified war effort. The activities of Australia's communists prior to the German attack on the U.S.S.R. were denounced as were the activities of groups of Jehovah's Witnesses. The sale of scrap iron to Japan came in for bitter criticism. 'We are assisting a country which . . . is definitely hostile to the British Nations . . .', said the Queensland branch secretary, 'to manufacture munitions which may be delivered to us, at a later date, gratuitously and not in a pleasant way.'

Amidst this general concern for national orientation towards the war effort, support of national drives for strategic materials, and specific requests for such things as the introduction of conscription for overseas service, came strong efforts directed towards implementation of a plan which had first been mooted by the League in 1937 and which had, in 1939, resulted in the R.S.L.'s active involvement in steps to increase Australian military capacity.

In May 1937 the Roseville (N.S.W.) sub-branch sent direct to the Prime Minister a plan for a veteran's reserve which had been initiated by one of its members, Major L. J. Danby, M.C. The sub-branch also sent a copy of the scheme's outline to the federal headquarters by way of the New South Wales branch. Hence, even though the government adhered to its long-standing policy of ignoring requests not emanating from the federal headquarters, it soon had to consider the matter after it had been forwarded on by the General Secretary.

When no immediate reply was forthcoming from the initial
representations, the General Secretary made a personal approach to the Minister for Defence. These representations resulted in the appointment by the government, on 23 December 1938, of a committee to investigate ways and means of utilizing the services of the estimated 54,015 ex-members of the A.I.F. who were under the age of forty-five and able-bodied. The membership of the committee was composed of the Inspector-General of the Australian Army, the Adjutant (or his representative), a representative of the General Staff, and a representative of the R.S.L. The League chose Sir Harry Chauvel (World War I commander of Empire forces in the Middle East) as its nominee.

The committee submitted its report on 16 March 1939, with the recommendation that a voluntary reserve of two parts be established; one section of the reserve, composed of men from eighteen to forty-five years of age, was to be for front-line duty and the other, of men between forty-five and sixty, for garrison battalions and administrative and communications purposes. Cabinet accepted the suggestions in their entirety and the League was given full responsibility for the recruitment of both 'A' and 'B' classes of the reserve.

Within the League the initial response to the reserve scheme was enthusiastic. Pressure to join was so great that the initial allotment of application forms proved insufficient and supplementary numbers had to be hastily supplied. Sub-branches reported keen interest:

I am pleased to report that all Wingham [N.S.W.] diggers have joined up. The country chaps being scattered will take some roping in but I can easily guarantee fifty from my sub-branch, all keen to have a smack at any Heinies that care to trot along. So keen are the boys that on Sat. afternoon they visited the local range with borrowed rifles and ammo and commenced a refresher course in musketry. They are keen to keep it up, and have asked if you can use your persuasive talents with the heads to have them issued with the necessary S.A.A. [small arms ammunition].

There were problems of liaison with the Defence Department to be settled from time to time but recruiting went ahead
The Impact of War

steadily until the outbreak of war. The reserve plan ended as recruiting to the 2nd A.I.F. began.

Although the utility of a reserve force ended with the outbreak of war, suggestions were soon made within the League about the desirability of the R.S.L. sponsoring a militia force composed of World War I ex-servicemen who, while over age for active service, could function in a garrison or other non-active capacity and so relieve the younger and more fit men for active service. At first little was done about the suggestions but agitation within the branches culminated in strong requests for action. In May 1940 the president of the Queensland branch, R. D. Huish, wrote to the Federal President:

We are continually inundated with requests from sub-branches and individuals, including non-returned soldiers, that we should take some action to immediately form a Volunteer Defence Corps, for the purpose of organising, and at least giving some elementary training to returned soldiers and civilians, who are over the age limit for joining the A.I.F.7

These comments prompted the Federal President to travel to Canberra to put the matter before Sir Brudenell White, the Chief of the General Staff. On the evening of 27 May 1940 they discussed the question at some length and White approved the suggestion in principle. He confirmed the decision in a letter to Dyett the following day.

Happily, Australia is not threatened on land. In consequence, there is no need for an organized citizen force capable of expansion. . . . There is no need therefore for national guards, legions, or such like organizations. . . . But . . . even after such an explanation, the pent up feelings of the community will not be satisfied and this, perhaps, applies particularly to returned soldiers. If their desires are not harnessed, they may be given voice which would be embarrassing both to the Government and those charged with advising them.8

White's assessment was verified by further word from Queensland.

Pressure from the sub-branches is becoming even heavier

73
The Politics of Patriotism

[wrote Huish on the 31st]. I am afraid that if the League does not take action, some civilian organization will, and members of the League will undoubtedly follow the leadership of anyone prepared to commence a scheme. . . .

And in the face of this pressure and White's assurances a meeting of the Federal Executive was called. The Executive discussed the matter and made a formal request to the government. A reply was immediate, and a meeting was arranged between the Minister for Defence, Mr G. A. Street, Sir Brudenell White, Dyett, and Mr E. V. Raymont, General Secretary of the League. This meeting gave official approval to the suggestion that a body for home defence should be raised by the R.S.L. and agreed that details should be worked out by a committee composed of three Army representatives and the General Secretary. The committee met from 11 to 13 June 1940 and, after resolving reservations based on the shortage of military equipment, settled details for the organization of the R.S.L. Volunteer Defence Corps. Sir Harry Chauvel was selected by the Federal Executive Inspector-in-Chief in general command of the Corps, and the branches appointed officers at the state level. Numerous problems had to be worked out but by the end of the year 37,120 men had joined. When handed over to the Army in May 1942 it numbered 50,000. The force eventually grew to contain nearly 100,000 men.

As the war progressed, the League began to shift some of its efforts into the repatriation field, where the situation was in some ways quite different from that which had existed during and after the 1914-18 conflict. It is true that there were also some similarities. There was no lack of public sympathy for returned servicemen and their problems, particularly after the rapid southward movement of the Japanese and the bombing of Darwin brought war closer to Australia than had ever been the case. Indeed there were no divisions of opinion this time about the justifiability of Australia's involvement.

The use of Australia as an operational base for the conduct of the war in the Pacific, the crucial campaign in New Guinea,
The Impact of War

the guerrilla-type fighting in Timor, the bombing of the Australian mainland at Darwin, the sinking of the hospital ship 'Centaur' off the Queensland coast, the attack on Sydney Harbour by Japanese midget submarines, all played their part in conditioning public and governmental attitudes. . . .

Successive governments were quite willing to assume responsibility for the care and re-establishment of returned servicemen—the precedent had already been set. Beginning with the retrospective extension, on 4 June 1940, of coverage under the Repatriation Act to all but a small number of permanent soldiers, and continuing through a series of legislative alterations and a number of public inquiries into repatriation, both Labor and non-Labor governments showed their concern for ex-service problems.

On the other hand, however, the R.S.L. was no longer the sole authority on repatriation, and while there was common agreement on the need to care for returned servicemen, there existed serious differences of opinion as to methods. Over twenty-five years of experience with repatriation had left a legacy of strong and sometimes conflicting opinions amongst several organizations and government departments. In short, there was a great deal more expert opinion available than had been the case earlier and all governments were determined to draw upon it and to avoid the mistakes that had been made and the problems that had arisen after 1914-18. Beginning in 1940, the Menzies government appointed a committee consisting of several departmental heads, 'to prepare data and recommendations with reference to the question of preference in Government employment to men who serve in the present war'. In March 1941 an Inter-Departmental Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, composed of Government and Opposition parliamentarians and departmental representatives, was established. In June 1942 the Labor government set up a parliamentary joint committee to examine repatriation legislation, and still later another parliamentary joint committee investigated the granting of a gratuity to the men of the 2nd A.I.F. In co-operation with the states, a Rural Reconstruction Commission assembled evidence on soldier settlement.
This situation posed a series of new problems to the R.S.L. The leaders of the League were opposed to the holding of searching inquiries into repatriation. Firstly, they were afraid that such examination would involve tampering with the fundamentals of the repatriation system—with which they were quite satisfied. In 1939, the Federal President had supplied the Prime Minister with support so as to enable Menzies to refuse a request from Mr T. W. W. White (U.A.P., Balaclava) for an inquiry into alleged anomalies in the Repatriation Act.

We realise . . . that there are anomalies in the Act . . . [one of the branch leaders had said when relaying Dyett's point of view to a sub-branch official] but there are anomalies which favour returned soldiers and their dependants generally, and any inquiry would probably have the effect of having them removed, which, of course, would ultimately react to the detriment of those on whose behalf we are functioning.13

Secondly, they did not want the initiative on repatriation taken out of the hands of the League. The R.S.L. had always had a favoured position vis-à-vis Commonwealth governments but open inquiries would afford an opportunity not only for investigation of anomalies but also for critics of such policies as returned soldier preference to put their views.

The League's opposition and, indeed, opposition from the Repatriation Department itself,14 did not prevent employment of the inquiry technique by wartime governments and so the R.S.L. had, through force of circumstances, to make its representations along with other interested parties to investigating committees before which it had no privileged standing.

The General Secretary and the Federal President presented successive briefs, with mixed success. In an appearance before the joint committee investigating repatriation legislation, Dyett secured 'in a most diplomatic manner' removal of the word 'directly' as a qualification to 'attributable' in the Act—a very fundamental alteration. The committee, of which Senator H. B. Collett, formerly president of the West Australian branch, was a member, brought in a report which initiated many changes long urged by the R.S.L. The inquiry
The Impact of War

into gratuity payment methods, on the other hand, completely rejected the League's request that men who had served overseas should be paid the full gratuity rate for the total period of their service, including time spent in rear areas in Australia. In fact, the frustration caused by the relative diminution of the R.S.L.'s position as an authority on repatriation combined with dissatisfaction with the Labor government's attitude to returned soldier preference, to bring the League's internal dispute over tactics again into prominence. As the certainty of winning the war increased and more attention could be paid to repatriation problems, the moratorium on domestic disputes ended. Thus when dissatisfaction with the repatriation efforts of the Labor government began to mount, so did branch demands that more aggressive methods be used. Simultaneously, Dyett's conviction that the government's hesitance was caused by its own domestic problems lent strength to his efforts to keep representations on the direct and diplomatic level so as to avoid precipitating a split within the government which would act to the League's disadvantage.

The campaign to ensure an even greater measure of preference in Commonwealth government employment than had been accorded after World War I, as well as preference for returned servicemen in all other employment, was from the beginning handled circumspectly by the Federal President. Dyett was aware of the criticisms of preference made by the 1940 committee and was determined that no opportunity should be given for a public denunciation of preference which could hamper the League's efforts. Particularly after the Labor government came to power he tried to avoid giving the critics of preference in the Labor Party any opportunity to force the issue against members of the government who were either in favour of some measure of preference to returned servicemen or who felt—no doubt with recollections of 1930—that a failure to provide for this aspect of repatriation would be politically inexpedient. In this situation Dyett re-asserted his conviction that on most occasions the best course for the League was employment of direct representations under the control of the Federal President. Maintenance
of such a policy was not always easy. Many of the branches continually harked back to the claims made after World War I about the value of returned soldier preference to the community. They echoed the 1921 assertion of Mr F. E. Forrest, then General Secretary, that preference enabled returned men ‘to place their services at the disposal of the country’.15

Every man who has returned [Forrest had said] possesses a far greater degree of intelligence, has a much broader vision, and also a more progressive outlook than he had before leaving. This increased intelligence can be used with great effect for the welfare of Australia.

The branches became irate about any criticisms of preference and Dyett was continually trying to calm them. When in 1943 complaints were made to the federal headquarters about a statement by Mr Paul Hasluck (then a senior officer in the Department of External Affairs) that inefficiency had been caused by the reduced standard examination for entry to the Commonwealth Public Service, Dyett had told the General Secretary to counsel moderation.

A controversy on the matter concerned may result in the publication, with possible repercussions . . . of the fact that a modified examination was provided as a result of the League’s representations in the early post-war period. . . . Therefore it would appear advisable to let sleeping dogs lie. . . .16

The League’s attempts to secure preference in employment for the men of the 2nd A.I.F. began on 11 July 1941, when the Federal Executive passed a resolution asking

That in order to ensure the effective implementation of the principle of preference . . . the Commonwealth Government be urged to enact legislation, and also at the Premiers’ Conference to request that the other State Governments do likewise. . . .

The resolution was forwarded to the Prime Minister’s Department but the matter was not listed for discussion at the Premiers’ Conference. In face of this lack of response Dyett
The Impact of War

decided to try a different approach. The branches were instructed to forward to the federal headquarters material for inclusion in a draft preference bill, the idea being that a model for a piece of legislation would be presented to the government in full. He seems to have felt that a draft bill, carrying the official approval of the Federal Congress, would carry more weight than the usual piecemeal representation of a series of items, or efforts on behalf of the rather vague ‘principle of preference’. Fate, in the guise of the Japanese thrust southward, intervened, however, and emphasis was once more placed on matters relating to the war effort. The war in the Pacific also necessitated a reconsideration of the definition of ‘returned serviceman’. Further, the coming to power of a Labor government made re-assessment of the preference campaign obligatory.

Little action was taken with regard to preference during the first nine months of 1942 and it was the Curtin government’s decision to prepare for amendment of the Commonwealth constitution that prompted the renewal of League representations. The minister in charge of the amendments, the Attorney-General, Dr Evatt, went on record during parliamentary discussion of the proposed amendments as favouring ‘preference to unionists’. He did little to allay the suspicions of some of the League’s leaders when, in response to a query from Victoria via the federal headquarters he declared his feelings in greater detail.

After the last war, the preference granted to soldiers turned out to be a sham, a delusion, and a snare. The soldiers, sailors, and airmen are entitled to something more than priority or preference. They are entitled to actual employment in callings to which they are fitted, and security of tenure in that employment.17

This statement received a rather cynical reception from men who from the end of World War I had been faced with a situation where unemployment was of considerable proportions and competition for jobs was keen.

Since they felt that there was little hope that, left to its own devices, the government would include a provision for
returned soldier preference in its amendment proposals, Dyett decided to take a rather unusual course of action. When Evatt asked for permission to circulate propaganda about the amendments to the League's sub-branches, Dyett seized upon the opportunity to renew the preference campaign. While refusing to let the Attorney-General communicate directly with the sub-branches, he agreed to distribute 5,000 pamphlets for the minister. These were sent to the branches, together with a circular requesting that they direct their sub-branches to pass resolutions demanding 'that those who have served Australia . . . shall have first preference in employment'. These resolutions were to be forwarded to federal headquarters for further transmission to the Constitutional Convention which Evatt had arranged for 24 November 1942. When the West Australian branch complained that 'SACRED NATIONAL OBLIGATION . . . SHOULD NOT BE SUBJECT OF . . . BARGAINING WITH ANY GOVERNMENT', Dyett replied that the situation offered the League a unique chance.

UNPARALLELED OPPORTUNITY FOR SUB-BRANCHES AS DIRECTLY REPRESENTING RANK AND FILE TO ENGENDER ATMOSPHERE VITALLY NECESSARY ATTAINMENT OBJECTIVE INDICATED . . . SUCH APPEAL FROM LARGE NUMBER WIDELY SCATTERED SUB-BRANCHES MAY PROVE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN RESOLUTIONS BY CONGRESSES AT LEAST WOULD PENETRATE THUS DEEPLY IMPRESSING RECIPIENT AND COLLEAGUES . . . SUGGEST DEVELOPMENT . . . PROVIDENTIALLY OPPORTUNE.

In fact, the time was not as opportune as the Federal President believed. There was insufficient time to get the campaign under way before the convention and no provision for returned soldier preference was included in the inter-governmental recommendations.

The League's 1942 Federal Congress commenced a day after the beginning of the government's convention and, in anticipation of activity by the other meeting, did nothing more about preference but decided to press on with the preparation of a draft bill. The branches all forwarded their suggestions to the federal headquarters after Christmas, the General Secretary re-circulated them, and a composite draft
The Impact of War

was prepared by the February Federal Executive meeting. This draft was then distributed amongst the branches for further consideration.

Although during his frequent trips to Canberra Dyett had been making some representations in hopes of creating a climate favourable to the reception of the draft bill, the branches were rapidly becoming dissatisfied both with the slow pace of preparation of the draft and with what they alleged was a lack of activity and aggressiveness on the part of the federal headquarters. Senator Brand’s successful inclusion of a preference provision in the Repatriation Act in March 1943 was applauded, but was also used to substantiate claims that Opposition politicians were more active than the federal headquarters. The old split over strategy and tactics was, in fact, re-asserting itself. Even the presentation of the draft bill, printed and in the proper legislative form after examination by a parliamentary draftsman who was a member of the Queensland branch, failed to satisfy the growing numbers of presidential critics. Dyett chose to forward the suggested legislation to the Prime Minister and to the three Opposition leaders—W. M. Hughes (U.A.P.), A. W. Fadden (C.P.), and R. G. Menzies (Liberal), on the day of the 1943 federal general election. They were asked to

arrange for your Party to give consideration thereto as soon as possible after the result of the election today is known, with hope that the Party will see its way clear to submit, or facilitate the submission of Bills embodying the contents of the League's Bills during the first session of the new Federal Parliament.

But Labor won a resounding victory at the polls, and despite the promises which Curtin had made during discussion of Brand’s preference amendment, no legislation was forthcoming.

By early 1944 several branches were complaining bitterly about the fact that the federal headquarters had been unable to secure any preference commitments from the Commonwealth. The criticism was intensified by the success which the Victorian and South Australian branches had had, in late
1943, in securing legislation modelled on the League's draft bill, at the state level. In January 1944 the Queensland branch president, R. D. Huish, informed Dyett that they were coming under strong criticism from the sub-branches 'to the effect that we are not aggressive enough. . . .' But Dyett vetoed the suggestion that a public campaign should be launched in an attempt to force the government's hand.

The League would be unwise [he said] to risk a public vote on the question . . . an ill advised or indiscreet act or statement might antagonize the Commonwealth Government, thus jeopardizing the League's objective regarding preference.24

Such action as he did take, however, was not well received. He travelled to Canberra in early February, and afterwards reported that 'The matter of preference was discussed at length with the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General,' but the branches were not satisfied. Although he assured them that he felt 'justified in stating that the Prime Minister will endeavour to arrange for the enactment of a Preference Bill', the branch leaders reacted unfavourably to his suggestion that 'the observance by the League of a policy of patience, tact, and diplomacy is advisable'. They were not as concerned as Dyett with the delicacy of the situation which the Prime Minister might face within his own government. Indeed, to them the vigorous complaints of the sub-branches were more to be heeded—particularly after Senator Brand had gained more publicity through an urgent adjournment motion on preference. They made repeated demands for either more action by the Federal President, or permission to launch a public campaign on their own.

In face of the growing pressure, Dyett finally wrote to Curtin in a cautious vein.

I am reluctant to add to your worries . . . [he said] but I feel that you are not unmindful of my difficulties, the chief of which are at present being strongly worded resolutions and communications referring to preference. . . .27

He added that he would 'be much relieved and most gratified' if the government could see its way clear to the
The Impact of War

introduction of legislation before the end of the current session. The Prime Minister, however, would give no assurances and pressure from the branches continued to mount. In late March the New South Wales branch began to demand that the Federal President press for the holding of a referendum on the subject of preference, and Dyett's position became increasingly acute in April, after Curtin went overseas. Forde, the acting Prime Minister, refused to make any statement about preference until after the Prime Minister's return. Dyett still maintained that a policy of tactfulness was the League's best course, but even his patience was being sorely tried. When, in July, delegates to the Victorian branch's annual meeting demanded that he telephone the Prime Minister 'to seek his personal assurances ... that a bill will definitely be an item of business in the next parliamentary session ...' he did not hesitate to comply with their wishes. The result was a shock. Curtin informed him that while no specific provision had been included in questions put to the country, preference would depend upon public acceptance of the government's referendum proposals. Labor Call (3 Aug. 1944) hailed this bid for electoral support without specific guarantees as a master stroke which was supposed to have 'bewildered' Dyett and 'left local Labor politicians speechless with admiration'.

After the failure of the referendum, the Federal President made several trips to Canberra. In September and October of 1944 he met the Prime Minister and other Cabinet ministers and gained strong enough assurances that legislation would be introduced the following year to enable him to dissuade the branches, at Congress, from insisting on taking matters further into the public arena. But the legislation which was introduced in May 1945 was a great disappointment to the League. In Parliament, R. G. Menzies (Liberal, Kooyong) claimed that the bill was 'a compromise between the Labor opponents of preference and those who supported it ...' and the members of the Federal Executive of the R.S.L. were equally critical. Some of them insisted that the League immediately take action to force the scrapping of the entire Re-Establishment and Employment Bill, but a majority
The Politics of Patriotism

decided to press instead for individual amendments. Such attempts were made without success—a result which was hardly surprising in view of the fact that the legislation was the result of a delicate compromise within the Labor Cabinet.30

DIGGERS

Federal and State Presidents of the Returned Soldiers' League who attended a conference held this week in Adelaide. At the top are Sir Gilbert Dyett, Federal President, Messrs Eric Millhouse (S.A.), G. W. Holland (Vic.). Below are Messrs J. C. Neagle (N.S.W.), H. J. Yeend (Canberra), J. A. Mitchell (Tas.), and J. M. W. Anderson (W.A.).

From Sunday Mail, Adelaide, 11 Nov. 1944

With the introduction of the 1945 preference legislation, Dyett's ability (indeed, his desire) to prevent the branches from adopting indirect tactics and campaigning on their own ended. Nearly every branch made abortive attempts to force changes in the legislation—with New South Wales distributing
The Impact of War

a pamphlet entitled *The War Has Been Lost* amongst its members. The pamphlet listed all federal parliamentarians from New South Wales and made suggestions for a mailed protest.

The frustration resulting from the preference campaign epitomized the League’s mood as the war ended. It was amidst general dissatisfaction with both government policy and the League’s representations that Dyett decided to step down from his office. The League would have to begin its career as a postwar pressure group without him.
The R.S.L.'s post-World War II situation bore little resemblance to that which had confronted the organization after the 1914-18 conflict. The economic problems which earlier made returned soldier preference of such importance, which necessitated the operation of League employment agencies and actions on behalf of those who had contracted war service homes and soldier settlement commitments, and which involved the League in a campaign against reductions in war pensions, no longer existed. Instead, a period of almost unrelieved economic expansion created an entirely new set of repatriation problems. The major difficulty lay no longer in protecting returned servicemen against problems caused by depressed economic conditions, but rather in maintaining the relative value of repatriation benefits in a time of increasing prosperity.

Secondly, a new situation faced the League with regard to matters affecting national security. Australia had been threatened by the Japanese in a way which had no counterpart in 1914-18 and the postwar years saw widespread concern with defence, immigration, and, with communist expansion in south-east Asia and the onset of the 'Cold War', anti-communism.

Thirdly, while membership fell off steadily after the 1946 peak of 373,947 and reached a low of 237,408 in 1956, the problem was never as severe as it had been after 1920. Indeed, the major membership problem involved not numbers, but the question of eligibility. During and immediately after the war, strong pressure in favour of widening the conditions of eligibility for R.S.L. membership came from some branches. At the 1946 Congress a resolution allowing the admission of all men who volunteered to serve anywhere and who served...
for six months and were honourably discharged, irrespective of where they served, was carried. New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania, and the A.C.T. supported the move and Victoria and South Australia opposed it. The decision caused wide controversy, however, and, at the request of Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, and the A.C.T., a special Federal Congress was arranged. This meeting decided to hold a referendum within the League. It was arranged that voting should be on the basis of one sub-branch one vote so as to put the decision in the hands of 'sub-branch workers, not the stay-at-home badge wearers . . .'¹

The referendum resulted in the move to widen membership being rejected.
The Politics of Patriotism

The following table gives the results of the plebiscite.²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R.S.L. Eligibility Plebiscite</th>
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<tr>
<td>No. sub-branches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
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<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<td>Victoria</td>
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<td>S. Australia</td>
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<td>W. Australia</td>
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<td>Tasmania</td>
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<tr>
<td>A.C.T.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P.-N.G. &amp; Darwin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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But the old internal problems remained with the League. The same tactical conflict which marked the organization's earlier days was present after World War II. However, the period saw the development of a compromise which satisfied both the proponents of centralized control of direct representations and the supporters of indirect methods and of greater involvement by the branches in the representation of League policy.

The compromise accompanied an alteration in the governing structure of the League, one which had begun during World War II when the increased tempo of R.S.L. activities prompted Dyett to bring the branches (and particularly their leaders) more fully into affairs at national level. In 1945, the branch presidents (with Queensland the only state not represented by its president on the Federal Executive) signified their intention of limiting the centralized power of the federal headquarters when they selected one of their number, J. C. Neagle, then president of the New South Wales branch, as General Secretary. After the resignation of Sir Gilbert Dyett the following year they followed this precedent and elected Eric Millhouse, K.C., an Adelaide barrister who was president of the South Australian branch, as Federal President.
Toward a Tactical Compromise

But the election of Millhouse did not immediately put an end to the old domestic difficulties. Indeed, while there was much more participation by the branches in the federal affairs of the League, and greater use of indirect methods, elements of the old controversy remained. Matters never reached the stage which they had in 1928 and 1930, but Millhouse was criticized on several occasions for expressing much the same point of view about pressure group methods as had his predecessor. When Millhouse became a close friend of the Labor Prime Minister, J. B. Chifley, he was the object of hostility similar to that which had been directed towards Dyett’s friendship with Scullin. A solution to the major internal problems only came in three stages which accompanied the periods in office of the League’s three post-war Federal (National) Presidents.

The internal problems which confronted the League during Millhouse’s presidency can best be studied through an examination of the organization’s efforts, during the late 1940s, to secure increases in war pension rates. For although many repatriation problems demanded League attention in the immediate postwar years—war service land settlement and war service homes were both vexatious questions, and League representations successfully resulted in increased sustenance to Repatriation in-patients and increased payment for loss of time from work by persons attending for repatriation treatment—the most important issue was that of pension rates. The R.S.L.’s efforts to try to keep pension rates on a par with rising living costs were given priority in the period after World War II and an examination of the campaign for increased pensions between 1946 and 1950 reveals much about the R.S.L.’s pressure group activities during Millhouse’s term as Federal President.

Although increases to war pensions in 1943 had brought their value on a par with increases in the basic wage (see Table IV, page 194), and for the first time brought widows’ pensions up to equality with the general rate, the situation deteriorated rapidly after the cessation of hostilities. War pension values in all categories fell behind increases in the basic wage and in living costs and average earnings. After
The Politics of Patriotism

the basic wage increases in late 1946 the position was difficult for all pensioners and becoming desperate for widows who depended on their pensions. In 1943 the pension for a widow with two dependent children amounted to £4 per week—17s. below the current basic wage. After the basic wage increase at the end of 1946, the same widow’s position had deteriorated by a further 10s.

Although the pension problem grew in severity throughout 1946, the League had to be prodded into action by the President of the War Widows’ Guild, Mrs George Vasey. Even though the 1946 Federal Congress made only routine requests in all categories of pension, Mrs Vasey’s initiation of a public campaign on behalf of war widows forced the League to take action. Not to have done so would have been impolitic. A public announcement of support for Mrs Vasey was made, and in March 1947 the president, secretary, and one executive member of the New South Wales branch, formed a deputation to meet the Minister for Repatriation, H. C. Barnard. The minister refused to consider any increases in widows’ benefits and the months that followed saw an increasing number of press statements by both the League and the War Widows’ Guild, a number of meetings between various ministers and senior R.S.L. leaders, and several written representations by the General Secretary.

But what had been a rather quiet campaign assumed major proportions when the government announced its intention to increase parliamentary salaries. This move provided the catalyst necessary to convert a series of routine complaints into a crusade. Mrs Vasey, the R.S.L., the disability organizations, and every major newspaper, combined in criticism of the government. Press coverage was extensive—as was indicated by the fact that during May and June of 1947 press cuttings gathered by the federal headquarters of the League from the major metropolitan dailies totalled 506 column inches. The July total ran to 563 inches with the campaign strengthened by the government’s decision to give the widows a 5s. per week increase. ‘Letters reaching newspapers protesting against the paltry 5/- increase . . . for war widows,’ said the Melbourne Sun of 12 June 1947 (editorial), ‘are scarcely
Toward a Tactical Compromise

less numerous than were those directed against the £500 salary rise for Federal members.' 'We can afford to be more generous to the war widows', added the Sydney Daily Telegraph of 17 July, and the Adelaide News (27 May) had already accused federal members of 'filling their own pockets'. 'Politicians who are in a hurry to put more money into their own pockets don't seem so eager to make life more secure for war widows.'

WIDOWS' WEEDS

From Herald, Melbourne, 11 June 1947

The League issued a series of press statements from federal and branch headquarters and followed up with a deputation
The Politics of Patriotism

to the Repatriation Minister in early July, G. W. Holland, president of the Victorian branch, and J. C. Neagle, the General Secretary, put forward the case for a greater increase in both widows' and other war pensions but Barnard would only promise to examine the allowances to dependent children and to give further consideration to any formal written submission the League could present. In the face of this, the July meeting of the Federal Executive decided to 'continue to press for increased pensions and other benefits for War Widows and their children'. The resolution was sent to the Prime Minister and all branches decided to prepare suggestions for a comprehensive submission on pensions and to give Mrs Vasey help in organizing a series of public rallies. The federal headquarters began a programme of issuing regular press statements.

At the September meeting of the Federal Executive the draft of a submission dealing not only with widows but with all pension and rehabilitation questions was finalized and Barnard was asked to receive a deputation. He refused, claiming that pressure of work would not permit him to meet representatives of the League before the end of the parliamentary session. As an alternative the new thirty-three point pensions submission was forwarded to the minister and arrangements made for a personal meeting during the Federal Congress scheduled for Canberra from 28 to 31 October. As soon as the opening formalities were completed, Congress took up the question of pension rates. Discussion centred around the proposals earlier sent to Barnard and the draft submission was formally adopted as the League's 'Pensions Plan'. It was discussed with Barnard on 28 October and with the Prime Minister shortly afterwards. At the meeting between the Federal President, General Secretary, the branch presidents, and the Repatriation Minister heated words were exchanged but nothing gained except Barnard's promise that the plan would be studied.

No response was forthcoming from the government before Christmas, and aside from a formal letter asking when a reply could be expected, the matter was not pressed by the federal headquarters. This lack of activity prompted criticism
Toward a Tactical Compromise

within some branches and the New South Wales State Council endorsed a District Council resolution which expressed grave concern at the lack of leadership displayed by the Federal Executive in its failure to call upon the States and through them the sub-branches . . . to launch immediately a campaign in support of the Federal Congress deputation.

The New South Wales branch had this complaint placed on the agenda of the February 1948 Federal Executive meeting, and one of the meeting’s first acts was to send a telegram to the Prime Minister asking him for an immediate statement of the government’s intentions. This approach received only a formal acknowledgement, as did another telegram from the May meeting. It was only after the General Secretary had sent a third telegram and a lengthy letter that Chifley replied. ‘The Government has the matter of all pensions, war and civil, constantly under review,’ he said. ‘This is evidenced by the amount of beneficial legislation over the past few years. . . .’ Even though the General Secretary pointed out the degree to which living costs were outstripping pensions, the campaign from the federal headquarters ground to a halt.

But the pause was only momentary and the August Federal Executive meeting saw a renewal of activity. The branch presidents voiced strong dissatisfaction with the lack of both government and League action and a critical press release was drawn up at the meeting. It ‘unanimously expressed strong dissatisfaction at the callous disregard shown by the Commonwealth Government in response to repeated representations for a long overdue and substantial increase in war pensions generally’. Then, after considering information on pension rates which had been supplied by E. V. Raymont, a former General Secretary who was the League’s current nominee on the Repatriation Commission, the entire Executive travelled to Canberra. Despite the reservations of the Federal President, they decided to interview individual members of Parliament in hopes of forcing action at the political level. This completely unprecedented step later prompted the Federal President to remark: ‘I cannot con-
The Politics of Patriotism

ceive of anything more degrading than representatives of a large national organization with international affiliation, buttonholing members (sometimes perfect strangers) in the precincts of Parliament House. . . . 56

Despite the President’s reservations about tactics the 1948 federal budget did contain a 5s. increase in war pensions. Even this, however, did little to satisfy the League, which was demanding at least 15s. The very rumour of the government’s increase had prompted the General Secretary to notify the Prime Minister that the League found ‘it hard to believe that the 5/- increase represents Cabinet’s final estimate of the Nation’s indebtedness to War Pensioners’.7

The first Executive meeting after the announcement of the budget decided to dispatch copies of the ‘33 Point Pensions Plan’ to all members of the Federal Parliament. The Federal Congress in October saw extremely bitter attacks on the government in general, but particularly the Minister for Repatriation. J. Wertheimer, president of the Tasmanian branch, and K. Bolton, a New South Wales delegate and former branch president, both attacked Barnard, with Bolton claiming that the minister was ‘an impossible man who can only sit looking in front of him’.8 These attacks gained some press publicity for the League although any satisfaction was offset by disappointment with the results of the circular letter to federal parliamentarians. Seventeen senators and forty-nine members of the House of Representatives replied, with about equal numbers from both sides of Parliament. Replies from Labor members were uniformly non-committal and those from the Opposition were evenly divided between persons who gave outright support and those who said that their reply would be given by the Opposition Ex-Servicemen’s Committee. All the replies were printed in the Federal Executive’s Annual Report for 1948.

By the New Year concern about pensions had become more widespread. A request for a joint meeting and deputation was received from the Commonwealth Council of Disabled Soldiers’ Associations during a special Federal Executive meeting which preceded a deputation to Chifley, and while it was decided that no advantage was to be gained from a
Toward a Tactical Compromise

joint meeting, the Executive suggested that more co-operation should be encouraged at the branch level.

The meeting with Chifley was unprofitable and even while efforts were intensified at the branch level activity from the federal headquarters began to lag. In New South Wales, the branch joined with the Ex-Servicemen's Organizations' Liaison Committee, and similar co-operative efforts toward the building of a public campaign were undertaken in every state. Numerous suggestions for further activity were forthcoming from the branches with Western Australia pressing strongly for the establishment of a parliamentary joint committee to investigate repatriation. The branch pursued this point strongly despite warnings from the federal headquarters that such a step could react to the disadvantage of returned servicemen. The General Secretary claimed that any liberalization of the Act might well be offset by the League's again losing its position as the major spokesman for ex-servicemen. He recalled the difficulties which had been caused by the wartime propensity to refer matters to investigating committees. Ever since the 1942 joint committee had presented its report League representations had been rejected on the excuse that 'the Committee, composed entirely of ex-service men, had made the recommendations on which the Government had acted. . . .'

The West Australian request, however, reflected the growth of the old dispute between the Federal President and General Secretary, on one hand, and the branch leaders on the other, as to the use of indirect tactics and the amount and type of branch participation in the national affairs of the League. The branches again wanted the federal headquarters to adopt aggressive methods, while the Federal President was afraid that the League's cause would be jeopardized by the use of tactics which might unduly antagonize the government. 'It is true,' said the President, 'that representations have been before the Government for a long time, but it is equally true that pressure is brought to bear on Ministers and members on all possible occasions.'

He noted the limitations of
indirect pressure: 'We can attempt to tear their insides out through the press, but the press is not likely to give us more than one scream and the effect would be nil.' While promising that he was willing to take whatever steps the Executive desired, he pointed out that 'the prestige of the League has never been higher and there is a greater degree of cordiality than I have ever known'.

This moderate attitude was overruled when it was revealed that the 1949 budget provided no war pension increases. The Hobart Mercury of 17 September headlined the 'disgust, disappointment and anger' of the Tasmanian branch president, J. Wertheimer, and the Federal President called a special meeting of the Federal Executive amidst vigorous criticism of the government from the leaders of all branches. Feelings rose to a high pitch and when the federal general election was announced, the Victorian branch recommended that the League make war pensions an election issue. This alteration of normal League policy was deferred for a decision by Federal Congress, and one of the annual meeting's first acts was to issue a press statement appealing

to every member of the League throughout Australia, and to every citizen who believes in justice to returned servicemen and their dependants to ensure through his vote, at the forthcoming General Elections, the return of loyal candidates, irrespective of party, who are prepared publicly to pledge themselves to support and, if necessary, initiate legislation to increase such servicemen's pensions to not less than £3.10.0 per week.11

The appeal was supported editorially in the Sydney Sun on 25 November.

Congress also decided, in another unprecedented step, to circulate a pamphlet prepared by the secretary of the Victorian branch, C. W. Joyce, entitled We asked the Commonwealth Government and Now We Ask You. Even though the staff of at least one branch refused to distribute this election propaganda,12 copies were distributed in all states.

Congress also examined the policy speeches of Chifley and Menzies and sent telegrams to each leader asking for specific
Toward a Tactical Compromise

pension commitments. Chifley refused to make any fresh statement but Menzies promised a comprehensive review of repatriation benefits and emphasized that his promise to establish a Cabinet sub-committee on repatriation would not be designed to hinder the League’s representations. He assured them that ‘you need not apprehend any want of sympathy or understanding in our approach’.

There were, of course, several major issues discussed during the 1949 election, but it is impossible to escape the conclusion that the controversy over pension rates played an important role.

Sir Eric Millhouse (he had been knighted in the 1950 New Year honours) died on 24 February 1950. Even though he had come to share Dyett’s conviction that tactful and diplomatic direct representations were the most desirable avenue for League pressure, the period of his presidency had seen considerable experimentation in tactics. The practice of drawing up a comprehensive brief containing League repatriation demands had been adopted and an attempt made to give publicity and support to direct representations based on this document through its circulation to all members of the Federal Parliament. A public campaign had been launched in an attempt to draw attention to the dangers posed by Australia’s communists—with the period between 4 August and 3 September 1949 declared anti-communist month. An unprecedented part had been taken in the 1949 election campaign and, on one earlier occasion, actual lobbying carried out in the Federal Parliament.

The greater variety of tactics reflected the increased activity of the Federal Executive. The election of Millhouse from his position as South Australian branch president had been an indication of the branch desire to prevent a perpetuation of the centralization of control which had existed under Dyett. During the late 1940s the practice of branch presidents sitting on the Federal Executive was confirmed, with formal approval being embodied in a 1950 constitutional amendment. The selection of J. C. Neagle, former New South Wales branch president, as General Secretary had also prompted increased experimentation in tactics. Neagle had led the New South Wales branch’s abortive campaign against the prefer-
The Politics of Patriotism

The RSL would be well advised to drop both its policy and its tactics, which were fast becoming indistinguishable from those of the Communists it condemned, and also those of the Nazis whom some of its members had died to defeat.—ALP Organising Secretary D. Lovegrove.

From Labor Call (Victorian A.L.P. newspaper), 8 April 1949

ence legislation of 1945 and had considerable independence as General Secretary because Millhouse resided in Adelaide.

The election as Federal President of G. W. Holland, veteran of twenty-one years as leader of the Victorian branch, confirmed the branch determination to limit the centralization of control within the League. But, although Holland had, during the 1930s strongly criticized Dyett’s dependence on
Toward a Tactical Compromise

direct tactics, it became apparent soon after his accession to the presidency that as far as repatriation matters were concerned he was now as much in favour of direct tactics, under the control of the President, as Dyett had been. Even while the branches prepared copies of the thirty-three point plan for distribution to all federal parliamentarians, in hopes of forcing the new government’s hand on pensions, Holland worked to ensure the League’s direct access to the new government. He met with the Prime Minister in early February 1950, and afterwards reported that Menzies had ‘assured me of his willingness at all times to discuss with the Federal President such matters as may not be covered in the ordinary way departmentally or through his ministers’. Together with the General Secretary he met Senator Cooper and made arrangements for the new Repatriation Minister to meet the Federal Executive during its February meeting in Adelaide.

Menzies’s electoral victory prompted hopes of an immediate pensions increase, but it was not forthcoming and Holland’s direct representations brought no immediate success. He attempted to strengthen the League’s representations by having the Queensland branch president see Senator Cooper on Anzac Day, 1950, but to no avail. Regardless of the efforts of the branches and the federal headquarters, the government would not be hurried. Even though Cooper informed the General Secretary by telephone that the ex-servicemen’s committee of Cabinet, set up in conformity with Menzies’s election promises, had reviewed pensions and that its proposals to Cabinet ‘were very substantially in line with the League’s Pensions Plan ...’ no positive action was forthcoming until the long-delayed 1950 budget. In fact, the federal headquarters was soon caught on the horns of a dilemma. Although certain, because of the Repatriation Minister’s assurances, that budgetary concessions were imminent, neither the Federal President nor the General Secretary could make a public statement. When the branches queried ‘whether League can afford to continue receiving these reverses without strong determined stand’, the federal headquarters could only ask ‘What action can be taken short of making a public denunciation of the Government?’ As
The Politics of Patriotism

had been the case in 1948 and 1949, the branches were quite willing to denounce the government although the federal headquarters counselled moderation.

Even though a substantial measure of pensions relief was forthcoming in the October budget the government refused to accede to the League's request to pay the increases retrospectively and the League's domestic problems became more complicated. As the branches had demanded more aggressive action, Holland had been negotiating with Menzies for permission to present R.S.L. demands before the ex-servicemen's committee of Cabinet. The 1950 budget took the sting out of pension representations for a time but Holland continued his efforts, coupling them with attempts to secure an increase in the war service homes advance. By early 1952 he was able to report favourably to the branches:

the Prime Minister has agreed that the sub-committee of Cabinet . . . will . . . be available for discussions with me on behalf of the Federal Executive in respect of all matters affecting ex-servicemen. . . . Other organizations' approaches will be through Ministers as usual.19

Even though the Commonwealth Council of Disabled Soldiers' Organizations was subsequently allowed to make representations to the Cabinet committee, Holland successfully protested to Menzies and had access restricted to the League.

There were growing reservations amongst the branch leaders about the degree to which access to the Commonwealth government was being dominated by the Federal President. They were loath to allow a return to the centralization of representations which had marked Dyett's administration. Hence, when Holland mentioned that he was encountering some difficulties in attempting, by himself, to defend and substantiate League policy before the combined criticism of the several ministers on the Cabinet committee, a procedure was evolved which allowed participation in these meetings by all members of the Federal Executive. It was decided that an annual pensions plan, on the lines of the 1947 document, should be put to the committee each year by the
Toward a Tactical Compromise

full executive. M. Lucke, the Tasmanian president, was designated as a one-man Federal Executive sub-committee to prepare a draft plan for Executive consideration. He found the task somewhat trying and other members were soon co-opted to assist him.

The development of the Federal Executive’s repatriation sub-committee and of the practice of making regular representation of a comprehensive statement of League demands, set the pattern for the 1950s. A defence sub-committee was set up in 1956, another, to deal with anti-communism, in 1961, and domestic matters came to be supervised by finance and eligibility sub-committees. The practice evolved of the members of the repatriation and defence sub-committees annually presenting a ‘plan’ containing R.S.L. demands to the ex-servicemen’s committee of the Commonwealth Cabinet and to the Defence and Armed Service Ministers. Personal and written representations by the Federal President and General Secretary continued but complaints about the lack of use of indirect methods ceased as the branch presidents were brought more fully into the policy-determining and implementing process at Commonwealth level. In fact, after 1955 the League came to depend almost wholly on direct representation of its repatriation demands and these representations became increasingly formalized in their nature. Instead of constant representation of demands in a piecemeal fashion—as had once been the case—major items of policy were consolidated into an annual ‘plan’. The transfer of the federal headquarters did nothing to change this, nor did the appointment of a new General Secretary, K. V. Newman. (Neagle resigned to become ex-service organization nominee on the Repatriation Commission.) Newman was strongly in support of dependence on direct representations and even refused to encourage any contact between the League and back-bench and Opposition parliamentarians. ‘Direct access to Cabinet’ became the League’s proudest boast.

Curiously, however, this situation did not last, and new developments led to the still-increasing formalization of direct representations being combined with the most determined moves into the field of indirect pressure ever attempted
The Politics of Patriotism

by the League. For even though the inclusion of the branch presidents in the process of direct representations brought an end to their open demands for greater indirect pressure on the Commonwealth government, the Executive was, after 1957, fully composed of branch presidents, and after Sir George Holland's resignation in 1960, the Executive began to experiment with new methods. The elevation to the National Presidency of A. J. Lee, president of the South Australian branch, and the selection of A. G. W. Keys, an active and prominent member of the New South Wales branch, as National Secretary (both World War II veterans) was accompanied by the determined adoption of indirect methods with regard to national affairs. This, in turn, had important effects on the League's repatriation representations.

Concern with defence and with the activities of Australia's communists was apparent in heightened form from the end of World War II. However, as the international situation worsened through the late 1950s, and south-east Asia became an area of increasingly grave problems, greater efforts were devoted to these subjects by the League. The greater rationalization of the work of the National Executive, the formalizing of repatriation representations, and a diminution in the urgency of repatriation matters, all contributed to the freeing of more time for consideration of national affairs. The change in the national leadership and the increased participation on the National Executive of the branch leaders, when combined with a growing sense of frustration concerning the lack of results from direct representations, prompted efforts at indirect pressure on the Commonwealth government.

The R.S.L. had dropped its public anti-communist campaign upon the announcement of Menzies's legislation to ban the party, continuing representations only at the direct level after the failure of the 1951 referendum. But a renewed public campaign was announced in early 1961 and reflected the frustration of some members of the R.S.L. with the apparent inability of the western powers to halt communist expansion. Agitation over defence centred around an appeal for the re-introduction of compulsory military service. Representations for increased defence expenditure, development of
Toward a Tactical Compromise

strategic bases, and improved service conditions were also made, but the main emphasis was given to a public campaign for national service training with the obligation of overseas service placed on conscripts. Representations on both defence and anti-communism continued at the direct level but in both cases attention was also consciously devoted to bringing indirect pressure to bear on the Commonwealth government. Deliberate public campaigns were launched. The branches made efforts to contact federal parliamentarians from their states, a constant stream of press releases was maintained by national and state headquarters, a small booklet entitled Subversion: The R.S.L. Case Against Communism in Australia was issued upon direction of the 1962 National Congress and 30,000 copies circulated. Other organizations were asked to support both the anti-communist stand and the campaign for national service training, and every opportunity was taken by national and branch leaders to promote the two issues before the public.

The impetus of the campaigns for increased defence expenditure, conscription, and against Australia's communists soon had an impact on the League's repatriation representations. For although the granting of 'direct access to Cabinet' had resulted in a lessening of many of the League's internal problems, some doubts were subsequently raised about the worth of this access in terms of actual results, particularly with regard to the general rate and widows' pensions. Hence, in the early 1960s, as the value of these categories of pensions fell farther behind the basic wage increases, the Executive began to sanction the use of methods designed to bring greater public attention to League repatriation demands and greater indirect pressure to bear on the Commonwealth government. The National Secretary decided to produce the League's annual report earlier than had been usual so that this comprehensive statement of R.S.L. policy could be sent to all members of the Federal Parliament and released to the press while the League's submissions and the budget were before Cabinet. A more determined effort was made to secure press publicity for League repatriation demands.
The Politics of Patriotism

The League, after World War II, developed through three distinct stages which accompanied the periods in office of three National (Federal) Presidents. An increasingly active Federal Executive was responsible for the elevation of Eric Millhouse from his leadership of the League in South Australia, and, despite the fact that Millhouse came to favour the methods previously championed by Dyett, his presidency saw ever-increasing employment of attempts at indirect pressure. When Flolland assumed the federal leadership there was an immediate move back to both centralization and direct representations. This caused some domestic controversy within the League but the longstanding conflict between the federal and branch leaders was solved by a compromise. Almost total dependence on direct representations continued, with these becoming increasingly formalized in their nature, but the branch presidents were given a larger voice both in the final determination of policy and in the presentation of League requests to the Commonwealth government. After the resignation of Holland in 1960 matters took a different turn. While primary emphasis on direct representations continued, as did the increased participation of the branch presidents, a conscious effort was made to support League representations through the exertion of indirect pressure. Under the leadership of Lee and Keys, and with the acquiescence of the other members of the Executive, public campaigns were launched on such matters as defence and anti-communism. This movement, in turn, had an effect on the League’s repatriation representations, and a growing attempt to employ indirect methods to support the R.S.L.’s annual ‘pensions plan’, as well as requests on war service homes, was soon revealed.

To foresee the future is, of course, impossible. However, despite continued general prosperity, the lapse of time since both world wars must increase the urgency of repatriation matters. Similarly, international events close to Australia seem likely to be of such a nature as to prompt ever-increasing concern with defence, anti-communism, and the restrictive immigration policy. Frustration with a lack of obvious Commonwealth government response to direct representations—
Toward a Tactical Compromise

even when the League is stated to be 'the only public organisation with direct access to the Federal Cabinet'-could prompt further resort to indirect methods by the leaders of the R.S.L. It appears probable that the future will see a greater mixture of tactics, with fewer internal problems than was the case in the past.
Part II

The Anatomy of a Pressure Group
Structure

When the R.S.L. was formed in 1916 through the agreement of four previously established state associations to the superimposition of a federal structure, the impetus behind federation was a desire to better represent the interests of returned servicemen to the Commonwealth government. The R.S.L. was formed with the object of political activity specifically in mind, and this motive, together with considerations of economy, conditioned the initial formation and development of the organization's federal institutions. However, while some subsequent structural changes have come as a result of attempts to increase efficiency as a pressure group, most of them have been related to the question of federalism—to attempts by the branches to ensure their control over the League's activity at the Commonwealth level. The branches have been most concerned to prevent excessive centralization in the hands of purely national officers.

The Original Constitutional Structure: 1916-21

A complex structure was one of the results of the way in which the League was formed. The individual development of the separate branches created differences at that level and a lack of initial experience, combined with the need to meet changing circumstances, complicated matters federally.

The original federal constitution of the R.S.L. made no attempt to impose changes upon the pre-existing branches, other than to lay out provision for finances and to rule that where a direct conflict developed between a rule in the national constitution and a rule in the constitution of any of the branches, the former was to prevail.

Under the original constitution, ultimate control of the League rested with an annual Federal Congress composed of five delegates from each branch. This meeting had power to
amend the constitution and to elect the chief officer of the organization, the Federal President. The President was limited to two consecutive terms in office and gave service in an honorary capacity. Provision was made that the venue of the annual Congress should rotate among the states.

General control of the League was given over to a Central Council composed of three delegates from each branch, selected for one-year terms; two were selected by the Federal Congress and the third was termed a vice-president and selected by his branch. The Council was chaired by the Federal President and met bi-monthly.

The federal administration of the League was placed in the hands of a General Secretary selected by the Central Council. He was charged with the maintenance of a federal headquarters located at the seat of government of the Commonwealth.

For several reasons the 1916 arrangements were found to be unsatisfactory. New South Wales complained about the provision of equal representation for branches at Federal Congress and refused to affiliate with the new organization. Affiliation did not come until 1917, after an alteration allowing New South Wales five representatives, Victoria four, and the other states three. A subsequent rapid drop in New South Wales membership allowed a return to equal representation by five delegates in 1918 and this system remained in effect until 1921, although most of the branches were hard-pressed to find the funds to send a full complement of delegates to Congress. In 1921 suggestions were made that the annual meeting was redundant and that it should be abolished, but a majority of the branches agreed that Congress performed a valuable task in publicizing the work and opinions of the League—particularly in the host state—and a compromise agreement was reached in which Federal Congress was retained but the number of delegates was reduced to two from each branch. This provision has continued, although when the Australian Capital Territory and Papua-New Guinea branches entered the League they were restricted to one congressional vote each. There have periodically been attempts by the New South Wales branch to restore some
Structure

form of proportional system but such attempts have been rejected by all other branches.

Early changes occurred in the Central Council, as this body was found to be cumbersome from the point of view of rapid decision-making. Its size made the securing of full attendance difficult and the branches found the cost of maintaining representation prohibitive. The Council met in Melbourne and while some branches appointed Victorians as their delegates, most found this and other solutions unsatisfactory. The inefficiency and unwieldiness of the Council led to the additional establishment, in 1918, of a Federal Executive composed of the state-appointed vice-presidents. Satisfaction with this new arrangement was registered by the abolition of the Central Council in 1919. The efficiency of the new and smaller Executive was attested to by the attempts, in 1920 and 1921, to abolish Federal Congress. Those who argued in favour of the latter move claimed that the Federal Executive could more effectively govern the League.

The Structure Since 1921

There have been a few major formal changes in the structure of the League since 1921 as well as some informal accommodation to changing circumstances. The changes, both formal and informal, can best be considered together with an examination of the structure as a whole, as it is presently found.

Although the bulk of the League's political activities are carried out at the Commonwealth level, a knowledge of the entire structure of the R.S.L. is necessary to an understanding of the way in which the organization's political functions are performed and the way in which this latter task is combined with performance of social and benevolent tasks. For the R.S.L. is not only a pressure group: it is responsible for the provision of wide-spread recreational amenities and is one of the largest benevolent organizations in Australia.

The Sub-branches

The sub-branch is the basic unit of organization within the R.S.L. Sub-branches are based at the community level,
it is to the sub-branches that members belong. The sub-branch is the rank-and-file member's link with the League.

Size. There is no maximum size placed upon sub-branches, but to retain their charters they must usually maintain a minimum membership of ten. It is not possible to speak of an 'average' sized sub-branch as they range from the minimum to over 3,000 members. Membership tends to be fairly evenly proportioned between country and metropolitan areas, with the sub-branches being of smaller size in the country. An examination of sub-branch size in three branches which together account for over 78 per cent of the organization's total membership indicates the range of variation in size. The figures are for 1963.

### TABLE II

**R.S.L. Sub-Branch Size**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Metrop. Members</th>
<th>N.S.W.</th>
<th>Vic.</th>
<th>S.A.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-50</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-75</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76-100</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-150</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151-200</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-300</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301-400</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401-600</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601-800</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>801-1,000</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,001-2,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total sub-branches         | 177   | 384  | 115 |
| Total membership           | 58,964| 41,629| 35,148 | 33,363 | 15,844 | 13,858 |

Comparison of individual figures with the population of their host communities indicates considerable variations...
Structure

between sub-branches in comparable population areas but in the absence of census data on the distribution of returned servicemen in the community, and without a great deal of detailed work on the conditions obtaining in individual sub-branches, it is impossible to make any definitive statements about the reasons for differences in sub-branch size. Leadership, sub-branch activity, the extent and type of social facilities provided, economic conditions in the community, and the existence of competing organizations are all factors which could have some effect.

Government. The sub-branches are the 'grass roots' of the League and each has its separate controlling apparatus. There are some variations between the branches, but each sub-branch is usually headed by a president who is elected annually at a general meeting of the members and who serves in an honorary capacity. Governing control formally rests with the annual and a monthly general meeting. Attendance at these meetings is sporadic and seems to vary according to political and economic conditions, the state in which the sub-branch is located, the size of the sub-branch and the host community, the efficiency with which the affairs of the sub-branch are being conducted, and the way in which social facilities are organized. Comprehensive comparative figures are not available but personal experience and numerous interviews both indicate considerable variations. The South Australian branch secretary estimates the average attendance at monthly and general meetings in the metropolitan area of his state at about 18 per cent, with the corresponding country figure at about 26 per cent. These figures are probably higher than those for other branches. There is usually provision for extraordinary meetings but the regular nature of monthly meetings means that emergency meetings are infrequent.

The general meeting of the sub-branch has power over constitutional alterations and also elects a committee to exercise executive control with the president. Policy resolutions for transmission upwards must usually be approved by either a monthly or annual general meeting. The committee varies in size according to the inclination of individual sub-branches, but usually has at least ten members, including the president,
secretary, treasurer, vice-president, and committeemen. The larger sub-branches sometimes have a secretary employed in a full-time capacity although in most cases a permanent secretary combines his position with that of secretary-manager of a League-sponsored social club. In the vast majority of sub-branches the secretary is an honorary official.

The turnover of leadership in most sub-branches is slight—a situation which seems as much a reflection of the degree to which the various sub-branch jobs are demanding of the time of their holders, as a reflection of the usual causes of oligarchy. Sub-branch officials are usually hard-pressed to find successors. As the representative of the R.S.L. in the community the president must represent it socially. In addition, he must attend numerous R.S.L. meetings at local, district, and state level, supervise the welfare activities of the sub-branch, and represent it on the committees of community projects. It is common, within the League, to speak of a sub-branch president's wife and the wives of the committee members as 'R.S.L. widows'.

Finances. The sub-branches form the foundation of the financial apparatus of the League. They are responsible for the collection of an annual 20s. subscription fee from every member—a sum which goes to cover the bulk of the administrative costs of the League at all levels. After collecting the money from the member, the sub-branch forwards from 10s. to 15s. (depending on the branch) to the parent branch headquarters. The only exception is in Queensland where the sub-branches forward the money to the district headquarters, which takes a share before forwarding the balance on to the state level. All branches forward Is. per member to the national level.

A small minority of the sub-branches get financial assistance from their connection with a League-sponsored social club, but most of them depend upon periodic public appeals and similar devices to finance their benevolent work.

Activities. The bulk of the work of the sub-branches is concerned with recreational (social) and benevolent tasks. Sub-branches are involved in the provision of recreational amenities for members and in caring for the welfare of neces-
**Structure**

sitous returned servicemen and their dependants. They also support local charities of a non-ex-service nature. They raise money for transmission upwards to branch-organized institutions and charities. Sub-branches are perpetually involved in such activities as hospital visits and work on community projects—particularly those connected with ex-servicemen and war service commemoration. The bulk of the benevolent work is, of course, performed by an active minority in each sub-branch, usually the small percentage who regularly attend sub-branch meetings.

A small portion of the time of each sub-branch is devoted to political activity. The sub-branches form the basis of the national policy-formulating process of the League. Policy resolutions move upwards from the sub-branches—indeed, all communications from the sub-branches must pass through the wheels of the machinery at the branch level. The sub-branches can be, but seldom are, brought into the League’s implementary process. Downward communication comes in the form of circulars and letters from the branch headquarters and personal visits by branch officials.

This downward communication raises the issue of sub-branch autonomy. The sub-branches are, in fact, wholly autonomous as regards all matters at their own level. The only money which they must pass upwards is a percentage of the membership subscription (the existing provision for a moderate *per capita* levy on the sub-branches for special purposes being almost never used). It is possible for a branch to suggest a course of action to its sub-branches, but it is in practice not easy for them to exercise any compulsion. The branch also has the power to withdraw the charter of a sub-branch, but this power is rarely used except where severely depleted membership has caused the natural death of a sub-branch. By constitutional provision sub-branches may appeal to the National Executive against branch decisions, but this, too, has seldom taken place.

**The District**

Although Queensland is the only branch with autonomous organization at the district level, districts do exist in some
of the other branches. In New South Wales, districts exert supervision over policy requests from sub-branches. District meetings with representatives of the sub-branches in an area can reject resolutions from individual sub-branches but the latter have the right to forward the matter subsequently to the branch level, though with the stated proviso that the resolution does not have District Council endorsement. Each district sends a representative to the interim governing body at branch level. In Victoria, the districts serve only the latter function and this is also the case in Western Australia and South Australia, although changes are occurring in the latter branch.

The Branches

The eight branches of the League vary considerably in size, financial position, and governmental arrangements.

Size. The membership of each branch reflects the size of each state, but only partly. There are, and always have been, significant variations between the branches on a per capita basis. The following table illustrates percentage variations between actual and potential membership in the inter-war period. The figures up to 1926 are based on Defence Department statistics compiled in 1921. They do not include migrants eligible for R.S.L. membership, but this is partly balanced because they do not take account of deaths after return from overseas. The 1929-39 figures are based on the 1931 census and are an under-estimate inasmuch as they do not take account of deaths after 1931.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1923</th>
<th>1926</th>
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<th>1931</th>
<th>1933</th>
<th>1936</th>
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<tr>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A direct comparison cannot be made with the postwar years because of the impossibility of determining the number of
returned servicemen in each state, but a comparison with the total population of each state—even considering the basic unreliability of the figures—does give an interesting picture. The branches in 1963 could boast of the following percentages: New South Wales 2.45, Victoria 2.23, Queensland 1.7, South Australia 3.1, West Australia 2.13, Tasmania 2.4, A.C.T. 1.55, and Papua-New Guinea 5.1 per cent of the European population. Besides reflecting differences between the numbers of returned servicemen residing in each state, the branch sizes undoubtedly bear relation to both factors at the sub-branch level and to the ‘image’, organization, and activity of each branch.

Finances. Financial differences between the branches are attributable partly to differences in membership size and partly to other factors. Comparisons are difficult because of the differing accounting methods used by each branch. It is hard to separate administrative expenditure from expenditure incurred purely in the performance of welfare functions.

The basis of the finances of each branch is the branch’s share (8s. to 14s.) of the annual 20s. membership subscription. This leaves the larger branches slightly better off than the smaller ones since the fixed administrative costs of an R.S.L. branch have a relatively high minimum. An examination of the income from capitation fees, compared with total administrative costs, reveals that while South Australia very nearly breaks even (a deficit of £1,949 in 1963), New South Wales shows a surplus of £8,989 in the same period. But comparison must be limited because New South Wales does not charge the costs of its pensions and war compensation advisers against general administration. New South Wales, in fact, made a grant of £12,500 to the branch ‘Welfare Fund’ to cover the latter costs, thereby incurring a deficit when a strict comparison is made with South Australia. The New South Wales ‘General Account’ surplus of £15,000 is really more a function of interest on investments than of revenue from capitation. Queensland finds her financial problems the greatest of any branch because, while the districts take part of the revenue from membership subscriptions, their existence does not result in any lowering of administrative expenses.
Queensland also encounters extra expenses because of an uneconomic official journal, and the branch’s financial problems recently prompted it to move for an increase in subscription fees to 25s. The suggestion was rejected by the 1964 Federal Congress.

Income from sources other than capitation varies greatly. New South Wales has an annual income from investments of £11,360 while South Australia gets £511 from the same source. All of the branches finance their welfare work through periodic public appeals. They also hold funds in trust and administer these for welfare purposes.

Government. All of the branches are formally governed by an annual meeting, termed a congress in six states and a conference in Victoria and South Australia. Some differences exist between these meetings. In Queensland, the annual meeting is representative of the eight district divisions within the state—each of which in turn has an annual meeting with sub-branch representation. Although a modified form of proportional representation is prescribed for the Queensland Congress, it is of such a nature that each district has, in fact, equal representation of six votes. In other states the annual meeting is representative of all financial sub-branches. In New South Wales, South Australia, and Papua-New Guinea each sub-branch is represented by one person, while in the A.C.T. each local unit has three representatives. Tasmania and West Australia each has a modified form of proportional representation based on one delegate for each one hundred members of each sub-branch, to a maximum of six delegates, while in Victoria a proportional system permits a maximum of eight delegates from any one sub-branch.

The agenda of each annual meeting is composed of items originating from sub-branches with the minor exception that some branches permit a very limited number of resolutions from State Councils. Resolutions come direct from the sub-branches in all states except Queensland, New South Wales, and, to a lesser extent, South Australia. The role played by the districts in the latter states has already been noted.

Interim policy-making and control in each of the larger branches is formally left in the hands of a Council based on
Structure

district representation. Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia all have bodies of this type, while in the remaining branches a smaller executive is given the same responsibility. There is an executive or, as it is called in Queensland, a management committee, in addition to the Council in the larger branches.

Each branch is headed by a president. In Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, Western Australia, and Papua-New Guinea he is elected annually by the delegates to the State Congress. South Australian presidents are elected for two-year terms. In New South Wales the president is elected on a basis of one vote per sub-branch, cast before Congress, and in A.C.T. and South Australia a direct popular vote is held. In the former branch a complete postal ballot is conducted and in South Australia a ballot paper is provided for each member attending the annual general meeting of his sub-branch.

The presidents are all honorary officials and in every branch the occupant must expect a considerable drain on his personal finances. The position is as time-consuming as the president chooses to make it, but most of the presidents who also hold full-time employment find that they spend at least as much time on R.S.L. activity as they do on their own affairs. More time is spent in social activity and visits to sub-branches than in actual executive work as most presidents find that the latter can be handled in an hour each day. Considerable time by each president is spent in participation in the national affairs of the League.

In no branch is the presidency a well-defined position and there is considerable controversy within the League regarding the way in which it should be treated. Some favour reimbursement to make the president virtually a full-time employee, others favour occupancy only by persons who are financially independent and who have developed their own affairs to the point where they can devote the necessary time to League activity. The pattern, in fact, has varied between branches. In New South Wales while presidents formerly had to have independent means they are now reimbursed so generously that they can devote all of their time to the position. In Papua-New Guinea, Queensland, and South
Australia, incumbency has long been by men of independent means in a purely honorary capacity. Elsewhere the pattern has varied somewhat. Some presidents have been men of independent means and others, while not financially independent, have been employed in positions which enabled them to devote the necessary time to the R.S.L. with compensation for a minimum of out-of-pocket expenses.

The length of presidential incumbency has varied greatly between and within branches. Two presidents have had terms of twenty-two and thirty-one years while the more common average has been three- to four-year terms. All branches except South Australia have had at least one president who remained in office for more than ten years. In short, there has been a considerable turnover, marked by several striking exceptions. In the six largest branches, between 1916 and 1964, there was a total of seventy-three presidents. Western Australia and South Australia have had sixteen each, New South Wales fifteen, Queensland and Victoria nine apiece, and Tasmania eight.

Each branch has an elected honorary treasurer and the larger ones have vice-presidents who are representative of metropolitan and country areas.

The administration of each branch is supervised from a branch headquarters by a paid secretary. He is a full-time official in all states except the A.C.T. and Papua-New Guinea and his duties involve policy as much as administration. The secretaries are employed by the State Council or its equivalent body and their terms of employment and remuneration vary. In all branches a record of activity within the League is as important as proven administrative ability when applicants are being considered.

Activities. The branches are mostly concerned with benevolent activities. They support institutions for ex-servicemen and their dependants and provide facilities to aid these same people in getting assistance from other sources. Employment agencies were once a major part of each branch although the need for these has abated in recent years. Branch staffs vary in size; however, most of the branch employees are concerned with the organization’s welfare work, whereas pres-
Sure group activity is handled by the president and secretary. The branches are also involved in attempts to influence governmental policy in their own areas and they have an important connection with the pressure group activities of the League at the national level. The branches act as a link in the upward movement of policy and also provide downward communication to the sub-branches. The branches are often used in attempts to secure implementation of League policy at the Commonwealth level.

The National Organization

As was seen earlier, the national structure superimposed on the autonomous branches underwent numerous changes during the initial years of its existence. By 1921, however, the institutions of which the League is today composed had been established. There have been changes in the intervening years but they have been changes within the confines of the basic structure. There are still three formal institutions within the League at the national level. They are the National Congress, the National Executive, and the national headquarters. These institutions are responsible for R.S.L. pressure group activities with reference to the Commonwealth government.

National Congress. National Congress is formally vested with ‘the supreme governing power of the League’. It is composed of the National President as chairman, with one ordinary and one casting ballot, and two voting delegates from each branch, except those in the Australian Capital Territory and Papua-New Guinea, which have one voting delegate each. The National Secretary, National Treasurer, and the secretaries of each of the branches, are entitled to participate as non-voting members. The meeting is held before 30 November each year (usually in the week preceding the Melbourne Cup) unless special circumstances dictate otherwise, and the venue of the meeting is rotated between the branches. Arrangement of a special meeting of Congress requires the written consent of three branches. Congress is charged with the election of the National President, National Treasurer, and National Solicitor after nominations from the branches. Congress also elects a Deputy National President
from amongst the current branch presidents. In these elections the returning officer casts the deciding ballot, if necessary. The returning officer is, in practice, the National Secretary.

The actual functions of Congress have changed little through the years. It must approve constitutional amendments and while formally the final arbiter of League policy—dealing with a lengthy agenda submitted by the branches—its most useful purpose is propagative. It provides an annual public focus on League activity and policy, and the attendance of distinguished guests provides the organization with valuable prestige.

The most significant structural development with regard to Congress has been establishment of the practice of each branch appointing its president as its senior and controlling representative. Although never formalized constitutionally, this practice has been observed by some branches since the first half of the 1920s and by all since World War II.

National Executive. The National Executive has 'full power to represent and conduct the business and affairs of the League according to the rules provided for the government thereof, and to do all such acts and things as the League itself could do, and which are not . . . expressly directed or required to be exercised by Congress'. The Executive is composed of the National President as chairman, the Deputy National President, and the remaining branch presidents. Each member has an equality of voting power and the National Secretary and National Treasurer attend as non-voting participants. With the exception of the National Secretary, all of the members of the Executive are honorary officials. Branch secretaries attend when invited to do so by their respective branch presidents. The Executive must meet at least twice yearly, in addition to meetings at Congress time, and in practice meets quarterly. It selects and employs the National Secretary.

The automatic membership of the branch presidents on the Executive has been formally of recent innovation, with a constitutional provision to this effect being inserted in 1950, although some branches were represented by their presidents, whenever possible, from the mid-1920s.
Structure

The Executive is divided into five permanent sub-committees of varying size which deal with matters relating to repatriation, eligibility for membership, defence, anti-communism, and finance. Interim sub-committees are also provided as required and one is at present constituted to deal with public relations. The National President and the National Secretary are ex-officio members of all sub-committees.7

The sub-committees are a recent innovation, with the first, the repatriation sub-committee, having been established in 1952. They are patterned after similar institutions operating in some of the branches and were a response to environmental alterations faced by the League in the early postwar years. They have become an integral and permanent part of the structure of the League. They prepare detailed submissions on League policy for approval by the full Executive.

The National Headquarters. While as a body the National Executive is involved in the implementary process to the extent that it prepares or approves submissions to the Commonwealth government, and meets annually with the ex-servicemen's committee of Cabinet, and some of the sub-committees meet with various ministers in deputation, the real executive and implementary functions of the League are controlled and performed from the national headquarters.

The national headquarters is the centre from which the League's senior elected officer and its senior paid official conduct the pressure group activities of the organization. Constitutionally, the headquarters must be located at the seat of government of the Commonwealth.8 In terms of physical facilities it provides a meeting place for the National Executive and office facilities for the National President, National Secretary, an accountant, and a staff of three typists and stenographers. The records and files of the League as a national organization are located in the headquarters.

The headquarters is administratively concerned with arranging the agenda for Congress and Executive from resolutions forwarded by the branches and with supervising attempts to implement League demands. It acts as a communicating link with the branches for replies from the Commonwealth government and is the point through which
The Politics of Patriotism

all communications to that same authority must pass. Statements by the League on national matters generally originate from the national headquarters.

The part played by the national headquarters is largely a result of the agreement by all branches that centralized representation of matters to the Commonwealth government is desirable. It also reflects the preoccupation of the branches with other matters. The headquarters has developed importance and power because of an agreement reached with the Commonwealth government in 1919, and adhered to since, that only League representations which had passed through the national headquarters would be accepted by the government and that complementary to this all communications from the government to the League would be sent to the headquarters.9

The headquarters depends for its finances on the 1s. capitation fee paid by the branches. There is a small amount of income from investments but the basic £13,000 is largely expended in payment of the small headquarters staff, office maintenance, and annual financial commitments to the League's international affiliate, the British Commonwealth Ex-Services League. In the League's case, the exertion of political pressure has never been a costly process (see Appendix E).

The role of the national headquarters is also partly a reflection of, and partly a contribution to, the structural positions of the three purely national officers of the League: the National President, the National Secretary, and the National Treasurer.

The National President. Although the branch representatives attending the founding conference of the League seem to have intended limitations on the power of the President, any such limitations of a formal nature have long since been removed. Terms of office have been for considerably more than two years (W. K. Bolton served for 3\1/2 years, Sir Gilbert Dyett for 27 years, Sir Eric Millhouse for 4 years, and Sir George Holland for 10 years; A. J. Lee has now served for 5 years and seems assured of office for some time yet; see Appendix D for a full list of National Presidents, Secretaries, and Treasurers) and the position is one of very real power
Structure

with regard to the making and implementing of League policy. The National President is spokesman for the organization on national issues, he is chairman of its governing institutions, and its senior executive officer. He is the only elected officer constantly in contact and solely concerned with the national affairs of the League.

Only fourteen votes are usually involved in the election of the National President, and because of the position of the branch presidents, really only the members of the Federal Executive are involved. This reduces the area in which manoeuvre can take place, and the incumbent, of course, has more to bargain with than have his opponents. Only one sitting president—Bolton—has ever been defeated, although there have been some bitter struggles. Since the resignation of Sir Gilbert Dyett in 1946 a new trend has developed in elections to the presidency. The position has now become one of promotion by sitting branch presidents of one of their own number. Millhouse, Holland, and Lee were all branch presidents at the time of their election and this practice will undoubtedly continue.

The National Secretary. The interaction between the National President and the National Secretary largely determines the ultimate role played by each. While the Secretary has no formal role in policy-determination, the fact that he is the senior permanent officer of the League means that more than any other person he is constantly involved in the organization's pressure group activities in regard to the Commonwealth government. The willingness of the Executive to let him play this role reflects the criteria which they have established for his selection. Even more than is the case with branch secretaries, a National Secretary must have a record of many years voluntary involvement in League activity and service. The histories of some previous Secretaries demonstrate this point.

The present National Secretary, A. G. W. Keys, joined the League in 1944 while still on active service. He was active at sub-branch and branch level from the time of his discharge in 1945 and was sent overseas by the R.S.L. in 1949 to help
in the selection and screening of European migrants. He was a District Councillor in New South Wales from 1947, except for an absence during the Korean War, and later New South Wales Councillor (a sort of country vice-president). In the late 1950s he was leading contender against the sitting branch president, W. (now Sir William) Yeo, and was defeated by only eight primary votes in 1960.

J. C. Neagle, General Secretary from 1945 to 1956, had a history as a sub-branch welfare officer and president dating from 1929. He was a New South Wales State Councillor from 1938 and metropolitan vice-president from 1940 to 1944. He became branch president in 1944. Before Neagle, E. V. Raymont (1935-45) had been a sub-branch president for twelve years, treasurer of the Queensland branch for three years, and a member of its management committee for seven years.

The National Treasurer. The Treasurer’s position has always remained something of an enigma. The incumbents of this position have varied considerably in their attitude to it and while some have treated it as a purely titular post with some nominal duties with regard to the rather limited finances of the national organization, others have seen it as an invitation to active participation in the national affairs of the League.

Its role as a titular position was reinforced by its development as the only position within the League which is habitually occupied by a senior-ranking military officer, but this titular concept has now been somewhat reversed. The present Treasurer, Air Vice-Marshall F. M. Bladin, has chosen to play an active role. His activity, in fact, was reflected in a 1962 amendment of the League’s constitution to formally approve of his participation on the National Executive. The fact that he is allowed to play an active role reflects two things: firstly, the fact that the members of the Executive are responsible for his election, and secondly the present strength of feeling about the question of defence—the Executive sees a positive advantage in the participation in their deliberations of an experienced military expert—particularly one who has access to other similar experts.
Structure

Comment

The League's structure obviously parallels the federal political system in which the organization is found. However, while there exist autonomous local units which perform social and benevolent tasks with reference to the 'clientele' with which they are in contact, and institutions at the national level to facilitate pressure group activity, the organization's structure still most strongly reflects the state units from which it sprang. Provision exists within the structure for the upward movement of policy and for communication in the opposite direction—both necessary adjuncts to the League's pressure group activities with reference to the Commonwealth government—but in its political capacity the R.S.L. is effectively dominated by an oligarchy representative of the separate branches. In an attempt to counter the diminution of branch control over the League's pressure group activities which occurred during Dyett's term of office, the branches developed the expedient of having their presidents represent them on the National Executive and of overlapping membership between the Executive and Congress. The small size of Congress ensures domination of both institutions by the branch presidents and guarantees the absence of clashes between them. The real expression of active rank-and-file opinion comes at the branch (and in Queensland the district) level, while the national institutions are representative of the branches.

The practice of the branch presidents choosing the National President from amongst themselves was developed, of course, in an attempt to prevent a return to the centralized situation which prevailed during Dyett's administration. It also reflected a conviction that domestic harmony could be ensured if the national leadership of the League rested in the hands of men who had demonstrated dedication and service to the R.S.L. at branch level. Despite educational, social, political, economic, and other differences, the branch presidents have always had one strong common point. They have always been men who have reached the most senior position in their respective branches—a process which required
many years of involvement in League service and League politics. The obvious choice for a National President is from amongst themselves. It is interesting to note that the suggestion that Sir John Monash be elevated to the federal presidency never commanded majority support and seems to have been more a result of a desire to depose Dyett than of a deliberate preference for the former leader of the A.I.F. Similarly, after World War II, Sir Thomas Blamey was firmly informed that the Executive could not comply with his desire to be National President.10

Although the efforts of the branch leaders to ensure their effective control of the national affairs of the organization have resulted in increasing control over policy by the National Executive, both the National President and the National Secretary continue to exercise a great deal of autonomy with regard to implementation of the League's demands. In addition, of course, they both play an active part in the deliberations of Congress and Executive. That the national headquarters should have a great deal of power and responsibility is, of course, inevitable. A federal structure was set up to facilitate centralized representation of demands, and since the Commonwealth government has always insisted that all communications from the League must pass through the hands of the national headquarters, its officers are given a great deal of power, despite the relative penury under which the institution operates. The branches are primarily involved with matters at their own level and so cannot hope to exercise effective daily control at the national level. Major domestic problems are avoided, however, by the qualifications placed by members of the Executive on the persons they select to supervise matters pertaining to the Commonwealth.

Although most of the structural developments within the League have reflected the desire of the branches to prevent loss of their autonomy and to ensure their control of the League's pressure group activities at the national level, the establishment of the National Executive sub-committees was a direct response to the exigencies of pressure group operation in a changing environment. The sub-committees were set up
Structure

in response to the government's establishment of an ex-service-men's committee of Cabinet and what appears to be a deliberate attempt by the Menzies government to formalize the approach of pressure groups. The requirement of annual presentation of a comprehensive statement of demands was one which could not be fulfilled by existing R.S.L. machinery.
Decision-making

Although effective control of the pressure group activities of the R.S.L. lies in the hands of an oligarchy composed of the eleven members of the organization’s National Executive, decision-making in the League involves more than just dictation by this oligarchy. Operation as a pressure group involves the making of decisions about both ends and means, and in the case of the R.S.L. both the formulation of policy and the determination of methods are tied up in a complex system involving historical, environmental, and practical factors.

Policy Formulation

After nearly fifty years, the fundamental tenets of R.S.L. policy are well established. The areas with which the League is concerned are well known and widely accepted within the organization. The main tasks of the policy-formulating apparatus lie in turning general policy into specific demands, determining the priority with which demands should be pressed forward, and in giving publicity to these demands so as to aid in their implementation.

Aside from vesting ‘supreme governing power’ in National Congress, the R.S.L.’s national constitution does not set out any formal procedure for the determination of demands. In fact, however, a system by which policy moves upward from the sub-branches, through the branches, to the national level, has long existed and has been considered as the formal system by the members of the League. In particular, it has long been accepted within the League that National Congress is the pinnacle of the organization’s policy-making process.

Indeed, the bulk of the demands annually put forward by the R.S.L. have followed the formal route. In 1963, 313 items were submitted by the branches for consideration at National Congress. However, while the existence of the formal route
Delegates to the first R.S.L. Congress, 1916

Although the names of all the delegates in the photograph are known, it has been impossible to identify twelve of them, namely: J. K. Langsford, P. Hosking, C. Cope and G. Fairbairn, from South Australia; W. T. Bateman, R. Touzel, Y. Sykes and J. W. Carnell, New South Wales; J. McGregor and W. Cameron, Tasmania; G. S. Bartlett, Queensland; and A. Smith, Victoria. The others are: Back row (left to right): —, ——, W. Burns (Q'land), P. Douglas (Q'land), H. F. Smith (Tas.), ——, ——. Third row: C. F. Broad (Vic.), ——, H. R. Carter (Q'land), ——, T. M. Murphey (N.S.W.), ——, ——. Second row: D. McRae (Tas.), W. K. Bolton (Vic.), E. Evans (S. Aust.), G. H. Dean (S. Aust.), D. Scott (S. Aust.), H. M. Maddock (Q'land), S. E. Dunslow (Vic.). First row: ——, ——, J. F. Eade (N.S.W.), J. Mackenzie (Vic.).
The Prime Minister (Mr Hughes) addressing the Federal Executive of the R.S.S.I.L.A. at Head Office, Melbourne, 11 Sept. 1919
W. K. Bolton

Sir Gilbert Dyett

A. J. Lee

Sir Eric Millhouse

R.S.L. National Presidents

Sir George Holland
The Prime Minister (Mr Hughes) being carried by returned servicemen along George Street, Sydney, 1919
R.S.L. National Headquarters, Canberra

R.S.L. National Executive, 1965
From left: W. Osmond (N.S.W.), Sir William Yeo (N.S.W.), C. J. Geard (Tas.), D. W. Elliman (A.C.T.), F. M. Bladin (National Treasurer), W. Hall (Vic.), T. C. Eastick (S.A.), R. F. Bunting (P.-N.G.), P. Pearson (W.A.). Seated: Sir Raymond Huish (Q'land and Deputy National President), A. J. Lee (National President), A. G. W. Keys (National Secretary).
R.S.L. National Congress (1965) being addressed in Adelaide by Sir Edric Bastyan, Governor of South Australia

A view of the crowded assembly at the 1965 New South Wales State Congress, Sydney
National President Sir Gilbert Dyett (seated), with three National Secretaries, from left: A. P. K. Morris, E. J. Dibdin, F. E. Forrest. Photograph dated 1927

A meeting between the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, and the R.S.L. National President, Sir George Holland
is well known and is utilized, there is a host of informal practices which operate within the confines of this route. In addition, there are means by which the final decision on many items of policy is taken out of the hands of Congress. An accurate picture of the way in which R.S.L. demands are determined must include consideration of both the formal route and its informal variations.

The Formal Route

The sub-branch level. There is a heavy flow of policy items upwards from the sub-branches. Every state branch has an annual meeting at which an extensive agenda, largely composed of items which originated in individual sub-branches, is dealt with. What must be remembered, however, when considering the role of the sub-branch in the policy-formulating process, is that the sub-branch does not exist in isolation. It is a part of a much larger body in which there is a great deal of formal and informal communication. In addition, it and its members are part of the wider community.

Policy at the sub-branch level can best be dealt with by supplying answers to three related questions.

1. What is likely to prompt the framing of a policy resolution in a sub-branch?
2. Who is likely to be so prompted?
3. Who will determine whether a policy resolution will be adopted and sent upwards?

While a conclusive reply to each of these questions would require more research than is probably warranted, it is possible to put forward some suggestions based upon personal observations and interviews.

All sub-branches are intimately concerned with the welfare of individual returned soldiers. All carry a considerable burden of benevolent work related to returned soldiers and their dependants and, of course, sub-branch membership is restricted to returned soldiers. Sub-branch officials cannot help but be aware of problems which may exist in the legislation pertaining to returned soldiers and of places where they
The Politics of Patriotism

feel that such legislation should be liberalized. In addition, there must inevitably be rank-and-file members who feel that their treatment or the treatment of one of their ‘mates’ by the government authorities responsible for repatriation has been inadequate and who desire alterations in the substance or interpretation of existing legislation. Indeed, such feelings are a cogent reason for R.S.L. membership. To this extent, then, sub-branch resolutions can be a genuine direct response to the problems faced by rank-and-file returned servicemen.

In considering the factors which prompt the framing of resolutions at the sub-branch level one cannot ignore an element of ‘feedback’, for the fact that the R.S.L. is a functioning unit which is constantly making attempts to implement the demands already established introduces a circular reaction. On the informal level the active R.S.L. member cannot help but be aware of the activities of the organization at the Commonwealth level. The publicity which accompanies such activities must inevitably prompt interest in League affairs and encourage sub-branch resolutions which ask for support, extension, or rejection of existing policy.

Feedback also results from the mobility of leaders within the structure of the League. All leaders, from the National President to district representatives on the interim governing bodies of the state branches, frequently visit sub-branches and participate in sub-branch meetings. The district representatives, in particular, are active members of local sub-branches. They are themselves well placed to initiate or to prompt initiation of policy resolutions. Motivation is supplied by their awareness of and involvement in issues at a higher level.

There is also a formal element of feedback. Sub-branches are occasionally the recipients of direct requests from higher levels asking them to endorse or reject a current policy of the League. This step is usually a tactical move designed to aid implementation of an established demand. During the 1931 campaign against a reduction in war pensions the New South Wales branch circularized all of its sub-branches asking them to treat the pensions issue as urgent and to
Decision-making

have it brought before your members as early as you possibly can, so that a strongly worded resolution on the lines suggested may be adopted and forwarded to your local Federal Mem-
ber. . . .

Sub-branch resolutions can also be prompted as a matter of prestige. Some sub-branch leaders consider that a proof of their organization's activity is the inclusion of at least one resolution on the agenda of the state branch's annual meeting, or even a district meeting. Resolutions are sometimes framed for this purpose alone.

While a resolution at the sub-branch level can be prompted from a variety of sources, most sub-branches are controlled by an active minority—indeed, the non-office-bearing members at a sub-branch meeting are often outnumbered by the members of the sub-branch committee. This minority is the group most aware of returned servicemen's problems at the local level and is more active in some sub-branches than in others. Of the forty sub-branch resolutions forwarded by Victoria for inclusion in the 1963 National Congress agenda, six came from one sub-branch and five from another. Six other sub-branches submitted two resolutions each, and seventeen others one apiece. There were 427 sub-branches in Victoria.

The question of who will determine whether a sub-branch resolution is to be adopted and forwarded upwards is, in fact, comparatively easy to answer. In some sub-branches the committee is formally given the necessary power to draft and forward resolutions. Constitutionally, the decision is up to a general meeting with most sub-branches but as has already been noted only a minority attends such meetings—a minority which is dominated by the committee.

The district level. District meetings, where such are held, act more as a place where sub-branch resolutions are reviewed and either accepted, rejected, amalgamated, or amended, than as a place for the initiation of demands. A district meeting is essentially a meeting of sub-branch leaders with the inclusion of the district representative(s) on the interim governing body at the state level. An executive member or
The Politics of Patriotism

permanent official of the branch will sometimes attend this. The full agenda of district meetings is predominantly concerned with state, local, and domestic matters but debate on Commonwealth-level items, while often uninformed, does reflect active rank-and-file opinion. The delegates have usually not been committed by their sub-branches to vote in a particular way on individual items, and oratorical power and personality often have a great deal to do with the outcome of the vote.

The branch level. The resolutions forwarded by sub-branches are combined with a much smaller number from state executive bodies for consideration at the annual meeting of each branch. This meeting is representative of the individual sub-branches in every state but Queensland. The agenda for the meeting is prepared by the state headquarters. The items are grouped into the major categories with which the League is concerned and the agenda circulated to all sub-branches. For the information of delegates the branch secretary ascertains the views of relevant government authorities on each policy item and arranges to have representatives of government departments at the annual meeting. While, after a vigorous introduction and seconding (for publicity purposes), many of the agenda items—pertaining both to national and state affairs—are carried unanimously as an affirmation of existing policy, there are items which involve new policy or a change of existing policy and are vigorously debated. The branch president, as chairman, usually restricts his participation to the giving of explanations and information and the district council and executive members play differing roles depending on the branch involved. For example, in New South Wales they take an active part in debate on resolutions, while in South Australia they make a conscious effort to stay out of things as much as possible. Generally speaking, the delegates themselves are not pledged to a course of action on any resolutions except those of their own sub-branches, and the decisions of the meeting, as at the district level, depend to a large extent upon the oratorical powers of those proposing and opposing particular items. Emotion, more than reason, often governs proceedings.
Decision-making

The annual meeting of each branch probably reflects the opinion of the active rank-and-file members.

The national level. At the completion of their annual meetings the state branches forward all policy resolutions of national significance to the national headquarters. They also forward any items which for various reasons were not included in the annual meeting's agenda but which have been approved for submission by the branch's interim governing body. The National Secretary groups the resolutions by subject and incorporates them into an agenda which is circulated to all branches. He also communicates with the government departments and ministers concerned to ascertain current policy. He invites representatives of these departments to attend the relevant Congress sessions.

The agenda meets with varying treatment from the branches. In all, the branch secretary prepares an agenda book for the delegate(s). In South Australia each section of the agenda is considered by a special sub-committee of the branch executive (State Board) but in Victoria the president is formally given a free hand to determine the stand taken on resolutions from the other branches. The other branches, indeed even Victoria, adhere to an informal practice whereby the state president consults various leading members of his branch on resolutions which he feels are likely to be controversial.

The factors which govern the making of policy decisions at Congress, and the type of decisions made, can be better understood through an examination of the agenda and minutes of the 1963 meeting. There were 316 resolutions submitted by the branches but, because of duplications, the total number on the agenda came to 266.

Forty-two resolutions were re-affirmed as part of the standing policy of the League. They were all items which had previously been raised and affirmed for several years in succession, and which all states had agreed should be considered standing policy. Typical of these were resolutions asking for free medical care for all World War I ex-servicemen (resolution 36), for automatic acceptance of cancer as a war-caused disability (resolution 51), and for another referendum
on the banning of the Australian Communist Party. These resolutions were all carried unanimously, although speeches were made for publicity purposes.

Eighty-four other resolutions were carried and became part of the policy of the League. Of these, fifty-eight embodied specific requests to the government which could not be classed as standing policy. These ranged over a wide area which included a request for the establishment of a repatriation ward in the proposed new Canberra hospital (resolution 78), and a unanimous request that the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ religious sect be prevented from preaching in Papua-New Guinea (resolution 258). Many of these items dealt with detailed interpretation of the Repatriation Act, for example, a resolution asking that an alleged discrimination in the non-payment of a temporary totally incapacitated pension to repatriation patients admitted to country hospitals before transfer to a repatriation general hospital be removed (resolution 73). Thirteen of the eighty-seven resolutions embodied no request but were rather statements of policy or thanks—such as an item in which the League recorded ‘its grave apprehension of developments during the past year in West New Guinea...’ (resolution 115). Five others contained commendation to the National Executive for policy being carried out at the national level. Two resolutions raised instances of anomalous treatment under the Repatriation Act and one merely asked for information. The remaining five dealt with the R.S.L.’s national constitution. Some of the items were carried unanimously and divisions did occur on a few. On no item, however, was there anything more than a tactical disagreement and at no time did the losing side indicate that it could not accept the decision.

Thirty-two items were declared to be covered by an already adopted agenda item. The procedure followed when substantial duplications existed was to decide which item was the better worded and to adopt it.

Thirty-two resolutions were referred either to the National Executive or to one of its sub-committees for consideration, or else coupled with such a resolution. These all dealt with topics on which the League presents an annual brief to the
Decision-making

Commonwealth government and most contained detailed financial or other recommendations. Since various states had made conflicting suggestions it was decided that the National Executive should select the amounts which the League would embody in policy.

Nine resolutions were withdrawn by the initiating branch for unstated reasons and a further fifteen were withdrawn after explanations by either the National Secretary or a government minister or official. These were items which had either been already implemented or which the departmental representatives were able to successfully argue would do more harm than good to returned servicemen.

Eleven resolutions were defeated after being 'formally moved' by the proposing branch. The 'formal' movement of a resolution signified to the other branches that the proposing branch wished the resolution to be defeated. This ensured that no time was wasted by the other states in opposing it in debate. These were items which either embodied a principle with which the branch president did not agree but which was nevertheless passed by his branch's annual meeting, or which he felt to be tactically unwise. Formal movement rather than withdrawal of the item was expedient since it meant that it would merely appear in the minutes as 'lost'. An example was a resolution asking that a woman whose husband had had any sort of accepted war disability and who had also been rejected for insurance by a life assurance company (regardless of the reason for the rejection) should be given a war widow's pension upon the husband's death (resolution 20). Another example was a resolution asking 'That in view of the Commonwealth Government's declaration that men of seventy years of age are unemployable, to grant Ex-Service­men over sixty-five years of age a pension equivalent to the pension for T.P.I.'s' (resolution 35).

Thirty items were defeated after debate. A few were treated in much the same way as the formally moved resolutions; however, others were the subject of very real debate between branches. Sixteen were defeated after very little discussion for what were largely tactical reasons. Delegates felt that they asked for extensions where such were unnecessary
The Politics of Patriotism

or which were too broad in their application. A request for a service pension for all men who were over the age of sixty and in receipt of a Returned from Active Service badge was an example. This would have meant the granting of such a pension regardless of need (resolution 17). Two items were defeated when a majority of branches decided that they constituted an unfair slur on a government department, one was thought to be meaningless, even by its proposer, and one was defeated because delegates thought that insufficient facts had been presented to substantiate the case. Ten items were defeated after disagreement on principle. These ranged from one which asked for the recognition of the work of dental mechanics by the Repatriation Department (resolution 97), to the constitutional item from New South Wales which asked for a modification of the equal voting provisions of National Congress (resolution 259).

Six resolutions were referred back to the proposing branch for further investigation or for implementation at the state level. Two lapsed for want of a seconder and three were ruled out of order.

Altogether, there were 266 items on the agenda, of which 113 dealt with repatriation and social services, twenty-seven with war service homes, six with war service land settlement, five with returned soldier employment preference, sixty-nine with defence, eleven with communism, three with immigration, sixteen with service commemoration, two with the Services Canteens Trust Fund, nine with the League constitution, and five with miscellaneous matters.

**Formal Policy-Determination by the National Executive**

There is an established route by which sub-branch requests move upwards through the interim governing body of each branch for determination between Congresses by the National Executive. This route, however, is not often employed. The existence of the main formal route is well recognized and its use encouraged. The National Executive will often hold a matter over for Congress determination, in the process of
encouraging the sub-branches to keep matters within the bounds of the formal system.

**Informal Policy-Determination**

Although National Congress plays a very real role in determining the R.S.L.'s demands, the number of resolutions referred to the National Executive indicates part of the role played by that body. The Executive has always been responsible for the initiation of some policies, and has come to play an important part in determining many of the League's demands and in setting priorities to matters established as League policy after consideration within the formal process.

*Policy initiation.* In view of the fact that the members of the National Executive are constantly concerned with R.S.L. affairs at national and state level, it is hardly surprising that there is a certain amount of democratic centralism, with policies being raised and settled at Executive level and then confirmed at lower levels. The League's decision to sponsor a meeting of representatives from veterans' organizations in south-east Asia is an example—indeed, one of considerable magnitude since the decision involved a fundamental alteration in the League's attitude towards relations with Indonesia.

In early 1963, Sir Raymond Huish, the Deputy National President and president of the Queensland branch, and A. G. W. Keys, the National Secretary, represented the League on a tour of Indonesia and other south-east Asian countries. The Indonesian section of the visit was arranged by that country's government following General Nasution's visit to Australia in early 1962.

Upon their return to Australia the two delegates submitted a report to the National Executive in which they related their favourable impressions of Indonesia and recommended, amongst other things, a conference of Asian ex-servicemen. The purpose of this meeting was to foster better relations with countries like Indonesia. The report, but not the recommendations, was circulated to members of the Executive shortly before the meeting of May 1963, and consideration of both items was provided in that meeting's agenda.

The treatment of the report and recommendations, both
of which aroused considerable debate at the meeting, provides an indication of the factors which govern decisions within the Executive. Some presidents immediately opposed all or part of the recommendations, but even those who favoured the suggestions agreed that no decision should be made until all presidents had had the opportunity to consult their branches. It was decided that the matter should be put in abeyance until the next Executive meeting.

A period of negotiation followed. There are no permanent ‘wings’ in the Executive, and in this case the presidents from Papua-New Guinea, New South Wales, Western Australia, and Tasmania had expressed serious reservations. The New South Wales president requested and received a rejection of the recommendations from his branch’s interim governing body. The Western Australian president submitted the matter to his branch’s annual meeting, where the recommendations were also rejected. The supporters were also active, however, and there were negotiations within and between branches. By the next Executive meeting opposition from Tasmania had been reduced to reservations about one recommendation and the report was finally adopted over the objections of three branches. This success did not end the matter, however, for negotiations continued and a unanimous re-affirmation was later possible.

**Final determination and priorities.** The evolution, during the mid-1950s, of the practice of presenting comprehensive policy submissions to relevant ministers on a regularly scheduled basis resulted in the National Executive taking over control of the final determination of many items of League policy, and particularly control of priorities.

In the months following Congress the National Secretary prepares agendas for the Executive sub-committees dealing with repatriation and defence. He includes the items specifically referred by Congress and also any other resolutions of standing or new policy which might be suitably included in a comprehensive plan. In consultation with the National President he also prepares draft submissions for consideration by the sub-committees. The agendas and other relevant material are circulated to the members of the Executive about
Decision-making

a month before the February meeting so that the state presidents may, if they wish, consult with members of their respective branches.

When they meet, the sub-committee members first go through the resolutions passed by Congress and decide which should be included in the brief and which should be submitted separately. They further examine the items referred to them by Congress. Where conflicting amounts are stated they determine a commonly acceptable figure and where it is felt that such is warranted, separate submission of particular items is recommended.

In deciding which items to include in the plan and the amounts to be requested—particularly with regard to pension rates—the sub-committee members attempt to proceed to mutual agreement based upon expert advice and tactical considerations. The National Secretary amasses as much expert material as possible and where items involving the treatment of returned servicemen are being discussed the members consult either their own experts or those in the Repatriation and War Service Homes departments.

Defence, of course, has become an increasingly technical matter and while there are many self-professed experts within the ranks of the League, the leaders attempt to get reputable advice from reliable sources.

When the members of the sub-committee have agreed upon a submission this is presented to the full Executive. Any alterations demanded there are incorporated and the plan is issued as the unanimous recommendation of the Executive.

In the preparation of these annual submissions the National Executive and its sub-committees are, in a very real way, involved in determination of policy. They are not only given the power to choose between conflicting items but also, since this is demanded by the ex-servicemen's committee of Cabinet, must place priorities on the pension demands. Indeed, the preparation of the plan can involve the initiation of policy—as was the case when it was decided to include a request for overseas training of national servicemen in the 1964 defence plan.

Standing policy. There has arisen, during the past few
years, a practice which has given further discretion to the National Executive, and particularly to the National Secretary, in determining the priority with which League demands should be put before the government. Matters which are now classed as 'standing policy' by National Congress are accepted as League policy but with no compulsion on the Secretary to press them to the Commonwealth. The Executive and the Secretary are given discretionary power to put such matters forward whenever they feel that the time is opportune.

**Tactical Decision-making**

Mention of priorities and of secretarial discretion in pressing matters forward leads to consideration of tactical decision-making in the League. By what process does the organization determine the methods to be used in pressing R.S.L. demands on the Commonwealth?

Although there was a certain amount of discussion of tactics by early League meetings, the final decisions in this area really fell by default into the hands of the Federal President and General Secretary; the branch leaders were pre-occupied with matters within their own spheres. This situation continued into the 1920s and through Dyett's period of office, with increasing branch efforts to determine pressure group methods accompanying dissatisfaction with the results of Dyett's efforts and reflecting the desire of the branches to take an increased part in the affairs of the League at national level.

The increasingly active Executive has, since World War II, taken a greater interest in matters at the national level, but while securing more control over the determination of demands, Executive consideration of tactics has been haphazard, with matters largely left in the hands of the President and Secretary. In fact, the National Secretary has come, since the war, to be the most important single person in this respect. The increased experimentation has partly reflected both the removal of Dyett's firm hand from the determination of tactics, and the greater autonomy given successive National Secretaries. Since Dyett's resignation, and particularly when the National President has not resided in the same city as
the national headquarters has been established in, each new Secretary has had, largely, to fend for himself. The League has never taken steps to record the methods used in its various attempts to influence the Commonwealth government, and instructions from retiring Secretaries to their successors have usually pertained more to administration than to pressure group techniques. Aside from examining old files—a task for which they have had little time—incoming Secretaries have had little precedent from which to work.

Comment

Provision is made in the R.S.L. for the upward movement of policy from the rank-and-file and most of the League's demands originate in or are injected into this formal process. The very existence of a well-recognized route for the orderly consideration of policy seems to have prompted its use. The final determination of policy, however, rests with the eight branch presidents and three national officers who together make up the National Executive and whose overlapping membership on to National Congress places effective control of both institutions in the hands of the same persons. This overlapping membership has enabled a division of policy-determining powers based on convenience.

Congress does settle some items of fundamental and contentious policy as well as many items of lesser importance. For example, while the question of the League's attitude towards allowing visiting Japanese politicians to lay wreaths on Australian War Memorials was first resolved by a 'gentlemen's agreement' at Executive level in 1957, it was, in 1964, deliberately put into the formal machinery for a final decision at National Congress. The informal agreement had broken down and it was judged necessary, even though it meant revealing internal divisions, to finally settle the matter with public discussion and an open vote. But the most important role played by Congress is in publicizing the broad outlines of League policy. At the 1964 Congress, delegates decided to pick a general resolution around which all branches could express views on defence for publicity purposes, and then dealt quickly with detailed matters by either a limited debate
or reference to the National Executive’s defence sub-committee.

The National Executive has taken over consideration of matters which it is felt can be better handled by a body of smaller size which meets in camera. There is no possibility of conflict between Congress and Executive, hence while many League demands are represented to the Commonwealth on the basis of a Congress resolution, the Executive has taken over the production of annual briefs on such major topics as pensions and repatriation, war service homes, and defence. The Executive and its committees, meeting away from the glare of publicity, can discuss with the greatest frankness the priorities to be considered when choosing matters from amongst the Congress resolutions and standing policy items, and when placing them within the brief. They can take over the making of decisions which, from the Executive’s point of view, are better made in private.

The decision-making process within the League is not without its problems. Although annual meetings at all levels are open to the press, as indeed are most meetings of the interim governing bodies of the branches, the complexity and length of the upward process means that movement is slow. The annual meetings of the branches range over a period from March until late August and sub-branch resolutions often have to be submitted for district consideration by April. National Congress is not held until late October and the National Executive does not draft the annual submissions until February or March. Since downward communication follows the same process via the branches to the sub-branches, sub-branches sometimes cannot re-submit a motion in time for consideration the following year. One of the most vocal complaints of some sub-branch officials centres around their loss of contact with a resolution after it reaches the national level and the time lapse before they know whether they must again press the matter upwards.

There have been some problems with regard to tactical decision-making, particularly because of the lack of precedent provided for National Secretaries and because of the lack of machinery to positively determine tactical policy.
Decision-making

By and large, the decision-making system within the League has well served this pressure group which must combine operation from a mass base with centralized representation of policy. There have been frequent divisions within the organization, but despite personal differences and differences between branches, the national officers have always attempted to make all decisions expressive of common accord. This has partly reflected their common commitment to common goals—the welfare of returned servicemen in particular and Australia generally—but also their common background of years of involvement within the organization and their feeling of collective responsibility for decisions made and a desire to preserve the organization through maintenance of an outwardly united front. The consistency with which they are able to reach a compromise points both to the strength of their motivations and to the degree to which informal communications have been developed to aid formal decisions.
Direct Tactics

The tactics used by the R.S.L. in its capacity as a pressure group can be divided into two categories. In their attempts to influence the decisions of the Commonwealth government the leaders of the League have employed both direct and indirect pressure. First, they have made representations direct to Commonwealth ministers (and to senior government officials with regard to decisions made at the administrative level). Second, they have attempted to bring indirect pressure to bear through enlistment of support from back-bench and Opposition parliamentarians, administrative officials, the press, other organizations, and, ultimately, the general public. In both cases the ultimate objective has been the same—to influence Commonwealth government activities.

Although both direct and indirect tactics have been employed by the League, a strong preference for direct methods has always been evident. The leaders of the R.S.L. have always preferred to deal directly with the government and have only employed indirect pressure as a result of frustration with a lack of results from direct representations. The R.S.L. was very early allowed direct access to the Commonwealth government and has ever since held a position of privileged access. Not only have the national leaders of the organization always come to believe that direct representations are, in the long run, the most effective as well as the most dignified, but they have feared that resort to indirect pressure could jeopardize the organization’s privileged position.

Successive National Presidents have been unanimous in their preference for direct tactics. Although overruled by branch leaders on at least one occasion, W. K. Bolton insisted that the League should deal through recognized channels with the responsible ministers. He was, of course, more concerned
Direct Tactics

with establishing the R.S.L. on a sound foundation than with considerations of tactical detail, but nevertheless made his opinions quite clear. Sir Gilbert Dyett developed very definite feelings about the ways in which League demands should be put forward. In 1928 he vetoed a New South Wales suggestion that a circular letter be sent to all federal parliamentarians asking for their support in attempts to persuade the Commonwealth to establish pension appeal tribunals, and censured the branch when, despite his ruling, it sent a circular letter. ‘Diplomacy is preferable to indirect and risky methods when dealing with Governments . . . ’ said the Federal President. Even though he did sanction the use of some indirect tactics during the 1931 attempts to prevent a reduction in war pensions, he overruled a request from the Victorian branch in 1932 for the distribution of a circular dealing with retrenchment in the Commonwealth Public Service.

It is generally known that I have never countenanced such procedure and the success of the League has more than justified my attitude . . . diplomacy is always preferable to aggressiveness or tactics which suggest compulsion.\(^2\)

Even though Dyett sanctioned increasing use of various indirect tactics during the late 1930s, particularly with regard to the League’s efforts on defence, he always maintained that such methods should be avoided whenever possible.

Millhouse expressed a clear preference for the employment of ‘dignified contact with responsible Ministers . . . by the Federal President in office or by an Executive member deputed by the President’.\(^3\) Sir George Holland felt that representations should be made, whenever possible, to the Prime Minister and was instrumental in securing direct access to the Commonwealth’s ex-servicemen’s committee of Cabinet. A. J. Lee, while sanctioning the most extensive movement into the field of indirect pressure in the organization’s history, has continued to give first priority to direct representations.

The R.S.L.’s attempts to exert direct pressure on the Commonwealth government have involved several types of
written representation and a variety of personal approaches of both a formal and informal nature.

**Written Representations**

Correspondence between the national headquarters of the League and the Commonwealth government is the standard method of direct representation which underlies all R.S.L. pressure group activities. National Congress resolutions which have not been referred, formally or informally, to the National Executive or one of its sub-committees are forwarded to the appropriate minister immediately after the annual meeting, and before the establishment of the sub-committees all Congress resolutions were dealt with in this manner. Similarly, resolutions which the Executive does not include in a comprehensive brief are put forward by letter. The few requests or complaints forwarded to the national headquarters by the branches between Congress and Executive meetings are sent on to the government with an appropriate covering letter.

The form of the written representations varies somewhat depending on the issue involved. In the past, most Congress or Executive resolutions were sent on to the government in a formal letter, without elaboration on the reasons for the request. The exception to this rule was usually a resolution which was either based upon, or which could be supported by, evidence from one or more specific cases. The practice of forwarding resolutions in a formal letter continues with two types of resolution: those which have been adopted by the League for the first time and which are not considered by the Secretary to be firm policy, and the 'hardy annuals'. The latter are policy resolutions which have been re-affirmed by the League and rejected by the government in uncompromising terms for a number of years. They are presented as a matter of routine even though no one is hopeful of success. The repeated presentation of the request for preference in promotion during the 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s is a good example of this type of issue. The Secretary presents the request formally at regular intervals, knowing that he can give additional weight to the submission if such is judged to
Direct Tactics

be expedient. Most matters of this type are now classed as 'standing policy' and treated accordingly.

The development of the practice of submitting resolutions for departmental comment prior to Congress or Executive has meant that written representations after these meetings have become more detailed. This seems to reflect both a change in tactics and a change in the type of issue now being put before the government. The comprehensiveness and efficiency of the present repatriation system has meant that many of the League's complaints now deal with technicalities, and so require explanations and examples. The broader issues of policy which are being put forward are also ones which seem to require elaboration since they are, as with the request for free medical treatment for all returned servicemen from World War I, issues which have been repeatedly placed before the government by the leaders of the League.

Because of the League's practice of re-affirming its demands at each year's Congress most matters can be put forward as expressing the view of the annual meeting. Once a matter has been forwarded to the government it is followed up with reminders or additional information until such time as a comprehensive reply has been received. Upon receipt, the reply is circulated to all branches.

Most of the correspondence is prepared by the National Secretary and the bulk of it is forwarded to the government over his name. The Secretary has always had an extensive degree of autonomy in the phrasing of written representations. As regards timing, most Secretaries have followed a practice of forwarding Congress resolutions immediately after the annual meeting. Indeed, this has become virtually a rule, since the branches invariably begin to complain vigorously if replies from the government are not circulated within a reasonable period after the meeting concerned. In recent years, however (by virtue of the development since 1963 of the concept of 'standing policy' and the incorporation of such policy into a comprehensive document), the Secretary has been given a great deal more freedom than was previously the case.

149
Representations are usually directed to the relevant minister, although the Secretary, in consultation with the President, does retain some discretion. If an issue is judged to be of sufficient general importance representations are often made to the Prime Minister instead of, or in addition to, the minister formally responsible.

Written representations are sometimes made over the name of the National President. This is seldom the case with the initial presentation of Congress or Executive resolutions, but is usually done in an attempt to give additional weight at what is gauged by the President or Secretary to be a crucial time. A written approach by the President is often made when a personal interview is not possible or not convenient. Examples of written representations by the President have already been mentioned. Dyett's written approach to Bruce in 1925 resulted in the Prime Minister warning the Premier...
of Western Australia about the consequences of not complying with the original conditions of the Commonwealth’s soldier settlement relief grant. More recently, following the A.B.C.’s documentary examination of the League in the television programme ‘Four Corners’, a written protest to the Chairman of the A.B.C. was made by the National Secretary, and letters to the Prime Minister and the Postmaster-General complaining about an alleged ‘trend’ in A.B.C. programmes were sent over the name of the acting National President.

The telegram formerly served as the medium for numerous ‘written’ representations over the name of the National President. This approach was usually adopted when time was of essence and/or when it was desired that additional strength be given to representations already made on matters known to be under active consideration by the government. Dyett followed up personal representations prior to the 1933 budget, in an attempt to prevent any further pension reductions, with a telegram to the Prime Minister. This communication was timed so that Lyons would receive it just before commencing discussion of the matter in Cabinet.

A favourite tactic of annual Congresses was to authorize the sending of a telegram to the Prime Minister on the opening day, with a demand that a reply be given before the end of the meeting. For example, the 1951 Congress sent a message to R. G. Menzies ‘registering emphatic disapproval of the failure of the Government to recognise the claim for an increase in the basic rate of war pension’ and demanding that the government give the matter further consideration. (The Prime Minister replied that he was ‘unable to vary previous decision.’)

152
Direct Tactics

grams has declined sharply in the last decade and this seems
to have been due to an increase in telephone communications.

Written representations provide the foundation of R.S.L.
pressure activity with reference to Commonwealth govern­
ment policy. A large amount of correspondence passes
between various ministers and departments and the national
headquarters annually.\(^8\) Some matters, it is true, are put
forward only as a matter of form. With others, written repre­
sentations serve merely as the formal opening for the use of
other tactics. Some written representations supplement the
use of other tactics but a considerable amount of League
policy is successfully represented by letter without other
activity being necessary.

Personal Representations

Although numerous issues of minor importance, and a few
of more significance, are initiated and settled at the personal
level, personal representations on most matters of policy
usually follow written introduction. Personal representations
are, in fact, the R.S.L.'s second line of attack—followed after
lack of success with correspondence.

The decision to begin personal representations is usually
made by the National President or by the President and
Secretary in consultation, although a request from the officials
of one or more of the state branches can be an important
factor in prompting them to take such a step. The Secretary,
as the League's senior permanent official, is best placed to
gauge when such activity is necessary.

Personal representations can be classed as 'formal' and
'informal', informal representations being defined as those
made during social or similar casual contact and formality
implying prior arrangement.

Formal Personal Representations

The history of the R.S.L. has been characterized by the
access to Commonwealth ministers enjoyed by the organiza­
tion's leaders. The national headquarters of the League has
invariably been able to secure an interview with a govern­
ment minister at short notice. This has been the case through
successive changes of government. The political complexion of the party in power has never been a hampering factor to the League and the R.S.L.'s leaders have been received equally well by all governments, although some ministers have been less accessible than others.

The first meeting between an R.S.L. leader and a Commonwealth minister came on 9 October 1916, with a meeting between the first Federal President, Lieutenant-Colonel W. K. Bolton, and W. M. Hughes, then Prime Minister. The interview had been arranged by the President upon instructions from the League's first annual Congress. Bolton later reported:

The Honourable the Prime Minister gave his cordial support to, and displayed a keen personal interest in the subjects brought under his notice, and directed me to inform the members of the League, the Federal Government regarded the question of Repatriation as an imperative duty, requiring immediate and effective action of a most generous and comprehensive nature.9

Although countless meetings have occurred since 1916 formal records are scanty. An examination of the files of the R.S.L. and of newspapers and similar sources, however, does provide numerous, albeit sometimes oblique, references to personal representations.

Direct personal representations can be classified under six headings.

1 Deputations.
2 Personal representations by the National President to the Prime Minister.
3 Personal representations by the National President to other ministers.
4 Personal representations by the National Secretary to various ministers.
5 Representations at League meetings.
6 Personal representations by state branch officials to Commonwealth ministers.
Deputations

Deputations by a group of R.S.L. leaders to one or more government ministers are usually arranged by the National Secretary in consultation with the National President or upon direction of the National Executive. The venue of such meetings varies, sometimes taking place in government offices and sometimes in the League’s national or state headquarters.

Casual deputations. The first League deputation was taken to W. M. Hughes on 19 January 1917. Verbatim reports exist of twelve meetings between a group of R.S.L. leaders and one or more Cabinet ministers between mid-1918 and mid-1920.10

Although the deputation was one of the most frequently used tactics of the League during its initial years, it fell into disuse during Dyett’s presidency. While on occasion Dyett and the Secretary would go together to interview a minister, the President seldom included other R.S.L. leaders in these meetings and actually preferred to make representations alone. As already noted, the centralization of representations to the Commonwealth did not endear the Federal President to R.S.L. leaders at the branch level. They frequently complained both about the lack of opportunity given for branch participation at the national level and about inadequate representation of their interests. But it was not until World War II that use of the deputation was really reinstated. Then, as a result of both pressure from the branches and the President’s failing health under an increasing load of work, several deputations presented League policy to the government during the latter years of the war. League policy was placed before the Rural Reconstruction Commission11 by a group of leaders which included men like K. H. Todd, country vice-president of the N.S.W. branch and that branch’s authority on land settlement matters. The Executive met with the acting Prime Minister (Forde), the Minister for Postwar Reconstruction (Dedman), and the Director-General of Postwar Reconstruction (Dr Coombs) on 24 May 1945, to discuss preference in employment and re-establishment generally.

Deputations were used more frequently after Dyett’s
resignation. Typical meetings were those between Millhouse, Neagle, Huish, Todd, and Holland, and Chifley and Barnard at Parliament House, Canberra, on 31 October 1947; between Millhouse and Neagle and Barnard on 14 and 15 July 1947; and between the full Executive and Chifley on 28 January 1949.

Regularly scheduled deputations. Since the election of the Menzies government in 1949 a new trend has developed in the way in which R.S.L. policy is personally represented to the Commonwealth. In this period there has been increasing use of deputations by the League; deputations at regularly scheduled intervals. This situation has arisen as a result of Menzies's 1949 election policy speech which promised ex-servicemen better access to Cabinet than they had enjoyed under the Labor government. Representations by Holland resulted in access to the Cabinet's ex-servicemen's committee being restricted to the League, and pressure from within the R.S.L.'s Federal Executive resulted in the President being accompanied by other members of the Executive when meeting with the committee. As already noted, satisfaction with the presentation of an annual brief or 'plan' to the Cabinet committee resulted in a similar practice being adopted with regard to the League's demands on defence and war service homes.

Although it was generally agreed that presentation should take place annually before Cabinet consideration of the budget, it was not until 1959 that a definite practice was established. In response to a query from New South Wales in the latter year, the National Secretary pointed out that

A great deal of thought has been given to the timing of the representations this year and Sir George has been guided by confidential recommendations made to him on a Ministerial level. The effect of the recommendations was that the League should meet the Cabinet sub-committee as late as possible in the present session.12

This has lately been modified somewhat. The Executive meets the sub-committee annually in March. War service homes representations are also made in March, while the
Direct Tactics

League's defence submissions are put to the relevant ministers in May.

Personal Representations by the National President to the Prime Minister

Private meetings with the Prime Minister have usually been the sole prerogative of the National President or acting National President, although on some rare occasions the President has deputed the National Secretary or another R.S.L. leader to wait on the Prime Minister in his place.

Incomplete records have combined with time to obscure relationships between W. K. Bolton and W. M. Hughes. However, Bolton was able to secure private interviews with the Prime Minister. In addition, it should be noted that the Federal President joined the National Federation at the invitation of Hughes in 1917 and became a Nationalist senator in the same year. There is little doubt that Hughes kept in close contact with the League President, particularly when the government needed support during the conscription referenda. It was Hughes who first granted the League its status as official representative of returned servicemen.

The use of personal representations by the Federal President to the Prime Minister reached its fullest development as an R.S.L. tactic under Dyett. He concentrated his efforts on personal representations at the ministerial level. His relations with Hughes suffered somewhat during the 1919 election from the controversy which developed regarding the gratuity. However, S. M. Bruce, from the beginning of his term of office, accorded the R.S.L.'s leaders the privilege of direct access. This was amply demonstrated by the Ryan case; and despite the break in relations which occurred over the Ryan appointment the Prime Minister afterwards allowed the League the same access as it had previously enjoyed. Dyett, for example, was able to go personally to the Prime Minister in July 1924 to ensure that no parliamentarians would be seated on the Royal Commission established by Bruce to investigate the assessment of war service disabilities.13

As the problems of returned servicemen increased with the economic difficulties of the late 1920s, so did the number
of personal representations by Dyett to Bruce. The Federal President met the Prime Minister on 20 January 1928 to discuss the retrenchment of returned men in the Commonwealth Public Service and, in a letter to Bruce in August of the same year he noted that:

your action in having Section 84 (9) (c), mentioned by me at Canberra, adjusted with the Commonwealth Public Service Board, is much appreciated.14

He had several meetings with the Prime Minister in April and May of 1929 regarding the possible transfer of the Repatriation Department to Canberra and the conditions relating to the transfer of returned servicemen in the Commonwealth Public Service in general, to the new capital.

Dyett’s access to J. H. Scullin, the Labor Prime Minister, was extraordinary. Close relations between the two existed during both the preference dispute and the pensions reductions issue. When announcing the amendment of the union preference provisions, Scullin noted that ‘representations have been made . . . by the federal president, Captain Dyett . . . who came to Canberra to interview me on the matter. . . .’15 It is doubtful whether any other period has seen as many personal meetings between an Australian Prime Minister and a Federal President of the R.S.L.

The accession to power of the Lyons government saw little break in Dyett’s access at prime ministerial level; he continued to make personal representations to the Prime Minister. In an effort to forestall any further pensions reductions he interviewed Lyons on Tuesday, 9 August 1932, on the evening of 17 August 1932, and ‘several times’ during the two days following. When reporting to the branches on the campaign for a service pension in 1935, he noted that ‘I have interviewed the Prime Minister on several occasions since his return from England. . . .’16 Dyett met Lyons on at least fourteen occasions between 1932 and 1937.

Although Dyett, during World War II, and Millhouse, Holland, and Lee since, all had access to the contemporary Prime Minister, with Millhouse and Holland developing personal friendships with Chifley and Menzies respectively, their
meetings with the Prime Minister have never been as frequent as they once were. This fact reflects increased pressure from the branches for representations in which they can participate, the formalization of procedures since the early 1950s, and the increased work load facing Prime Ministers since 1939.17

When discussing personal representations at presidential-prime ministerial level mention must be made of telephone communications. Although such communication is extremely difficult to catalogue, the files of the League do provide references to telephone representations by Dyett to Scullin and Lyons. It would seem that such contact has decreased in recent years.

Despite a recent shift in tactics away from extensive use of personal negotiations by the President it is obvious that the League's National President has, in the past, enjoyed liberal access to successive Prime Ministers. This access has certainly exceeded that accorded to other ex-service organizations and this fact probably reflects both the personal links which have existed between League Presidents and Prime Ministers and the R.S.L.'s size and its early establishment as the major ex-service organization in Australia.

**Personal Representations by the National President to Other Ministers**

The League's Presidents have never confined their personal representations solely to meetings with the Prime Minister. Even while demonstrating a clear preference for taking requests to the senior executive whenever possible, they have all been involved in numerous personal representations to other ministers. This has occurred both when the Prime Minister was unavailable and when a matter was of such a nature that it could be effectively dealt with by a lesser person than the Prime Minister.

Personal negotiations between Earle Page and Dyett preceded the establishment of the Royal Commission to investigate the assessment of war disability in 1924 and occurred in 1925 when the League was attempting to ensure that the means test would not include a war pension when eligibility for civilian social service benefits was being considered. Dyett
The Politics of Patriotism

and Howse were in close contact during discussion of the appeal tribunal issue in 1928-9, and Dyett interviewed P. J. Maloney, Minister for Markets and Transport in the Scullin government, on war service homes matters on 12 February 1931, at the request of the Queensland branch of the R.S.L. Dyett had to be content with interviewing the acting Assistant Treasurer on one occasion in 1932 when the Prime Minister was in Tasmania.18

Although the pattern of ministerial access has changed very little since Dyett's resignation, increasing dependence on deputations and increased activity by the branch presidents on the Executive have reduced the number of personal representations by the National President to individual ministers. Certainly, however, access at ministerial level is still readily available when necessary.

The League, it should be noted, has always confined its representations to the Prime Minister or to a minister in charge of a specific matter in which it is interested. Probably owing to the fact that they have enjoyed liberal ministerial access, the leaders of the League have never felt the need to recruit more general support in Cabinet by approaching other ministers than the one responsible for the matter under consideration.

Personal Representations by the National Secretary to Ministers

As the amount of personal contact between National Presidents and individual Cabinet ministers has decreased as a result of alteration in the general tactics of the League, the location of the national headquarters in Canberra has seen the amount of personal contact between the National Secretary and various ministers increase. This, however, must not be taken to imply that National Secretaries have not previously been occupied in such activity. Dyett, although he prevented much participation by state branch officials, did allow successive Secretaries to make personal representations on matters which he judged did not require his personal intervention and when he was not available. In fact, centralization under Dyett resulted in the General Secretary occupy-
Direct Tactics

ing an extremely strong position in the League. The Federal President preferred to entrust matters to the Secretary than call in assistance from the state level.

Successive Secretaries have personally represented the League’s point of view to various ministers. In 1921 F. E. Forrest advised the Tasmanian branch that he had interviewed the Repatriation Minister and ‘also waited on the Postmaster-General’. At another time he notified South Australia that he ‘had met Senator Crawford, the Acting Prime Minister, and Mr. Marr, Secretary to the Cabinet’. The Secretary’s contact with ministers increased during the Depression.

While the interviewing of the Prime Minister has generally been left to the President, there have been occasions when this task has been deputed to the Secretary. In 1925 E. J. Dibdin told the South Australian branch secretary that he would be seeing Bruce ‘at the end of the week’ to discuss retrenchment. In May 1932 Dyett arranged with Lyons for the General Secretary to meet him to discuss amendment of the Commonwealth Public Service Act.

Even while state branch officials began to assume a more effective role in the making of representations at the national level during the latter 1940s, the National Secretary’s position did not diminish. Indeed, it was sharply enhanced in 1956 by transfer to Canberra of the national headquarters. Although he is in almost constant consultation with the National President, the Secretary has come to take over most of the routine representation of matters to various ministers either in person or by telephone. Formalization of the main representations of the League has not reduced the contact on minor items of policy and machinery and most of this work falls, as a matter of course, to the National Secretary, who must be in frequent contact with the Minister for Repatriation as well as other ministers.

Representations at League Meetings

Although such attendance is probably more important as an opportunity for informal representation of demands, the fact that the Repatriation Minister in particular, but also other members of the government, attend the League’s annual meet-
The Politics of Patriotism

ings at national and state level has always afforded the leaders of the R.S.L. an opportunity to ensure that ministers are generally aware of League policy and particularly the reasons for it. Such attendance, particularly at sessions of National Congress, has provided a place at which specific policies can be put to the minister for a public decision.

Ministers, while not always so cautious, seem to have recognized the problems inherent in such a situation and while invariably taking the opportunity to let delegates and the public know of the work of the government in each particular field, usually leave comment on actual resolutions and points of policy up to the permanent government officers who also attend such meetings. The officials, of course, refuse to answer any questions of policy. They merely point out when such a question is asked that it is a matter of policy and therefore for the decision of the minister.

Personal Representations by Branch Officials to Ministers

Although he effectively centralized control of representa­tions in his own hands, Dyett sometimes found it expedient to delegate to branch leaders the responsibility for inter­viewing Commonwealth ministers. Such a procedure was rare and was usually only adopted when the matter at issue was of local importance or when the person to be interviewed was not available to Dyett. Some branch leaders took matters into their own hands on occasion but as an instance of Dyett deputing this power, R. Rowe and other members of the A.C.T. branch in 1932 were to be found interviewing the Minister for Home and Territories and other ministers on the subject of soldier settlement in the Territory.²² They were members of a committee established by the 1931 Congress to deal with the question of soldier settlement in the A.C.T. In this case Dyett had made arrangements for them to put their case before the Prime Minister but this had been can­celled because of time-table clashes, and arrangements made instead for a meeting with the other ministers. (This was, as a matter of fact, one of the few Dyett-sanctioned deputations of the 1920s and 1930s.) Another example of this type
Direct Tactics

of activity came in 1950 when Holland asked R. D. Huish, the Queensland president, to make arrangements to interview Fadden when the Treasurer was in Brisbane for Anzac Day, but this sort of representation has never been common. Most participation by branch officials has come through their inclusion in deputations.

Informal Personal Representations

Although their very nature makes informal representation difficult to examine, one can point to the area in which informal contact between R.S.L. leaders and Commonwealth government ministers takes place. There can be little doubt that such contact provides an opportunity for the pressing by the League of its point of view, and for frank discussion with ministers.

There is a great deal of social contact between government and R.S.L. leaders. The Repatriation and other ministers attend the League’s annual meetings at branch, national, and sometimes district level and participate in the numerous social functions which accompany such meetings. Ministerial attendance at such meetings provides numerous occasions for informal discussion between the League and the government.

The government itself arranges social contact. Menzies noted in 1954, when speaking at National Congress about the proposed transfer of the national headquarters to Canberra:

I am looking forward . . . to this . . . establishment of yours at the seat of Government, because it will enable us to meet constantly and on most occasions quite informally, to exchange views. I have yet to meet one of your permanent executives with whom I would not be quite happy to discuss any matter of public interest at all.24

Various members of the government arrange social functions to entertain the National Executive when that body is meeting in Canberra and particularly when the annual ‘plans’ are being presented to the government. League representatives are always invited to government functions in Canberra, a fact which again provides the opportunity for a great deal of informal contact.
The Politics of Patriotism

The League includes government representatives on its guest list for social functions at national and state level. Social gatherings which accompany, as an example, the Prime Minister's unveiling of a commemorative stone at the national headquarters, provide opportunities for informal discussions on matters of mutual interest and concern. In addition there are informal ties between many League leaders and government ministers, particularly those who have been active within the R.S.L. Sir Josiah Francis, Sir Donald Cameron, Senator Sir Walter Cooper, and R. W. C. Swartz were all active and prominent members of the Queensland branch of the R.S.L. early in their political careers. Senator H. B. Collett and F. C. Chaney were both former presidents of the West Australian branch of the R.S.L. J. J. Dedman was a member of the Victorian R.S.L. state council before his election to public office. Sir Charles Marr, H. S. Foll, Sir Henry Gullett, and G. A. Street were all active R.S.L. members when on the back-benches or prior to their entry into politics.

Comment

R.S.L. National Presidents and Secretaries have always placed primary emphasis on the direct representation of League policy to members of the Commonwealth government. Formally, most representations have been initiated and finalized by letter from the national headquarters. Informally, while a large part of League policy is never pressed beyond the written stage, indeed does not require further action, additional weight in the form of personal representations is given to many requests after written approaches have proved unsuccessful.

An interesting trend in the pattern of the League's direct representations has begun to assert itself in recent years. Since 1945 increased pressure for involvement in representations at the national level has come from the branches and Dyett's successors, all former branch presidents, have seemed less disposed to prevent such participation. The most important result of this increased pressure has been that when combined with environmental factors it has encouraged a
Direct Tactics

formalization of the League's direct representations. The former practice of ad hoc representations on individual issues has been replaced by regularly scheduled representation of 'plans' which set out League demands in detail. The National Secretary has come to have greater control over items of a routine nature while other matters are represented in an increasingly formalized manner.

An examination of the direct representations of any pressure group must inevitably be hampered by the fact that many of these representations are carried out on a personal level and in camera. Not only are no records kept of the number and venue of such meetings or the number of casual telephone contacts, but records of the discussion at such meetings are even more difficult to collect.

Despite the R.S.L.'s concentration on personal representations, however, the organization's files and records provide some helpful insights into the frequency and direction of the direct pressure exerted by this particular body. As for the text of League-government discussions, one can only make some informed guesses. It is true that many of the meetings with the government today have taken on a somewhat formal quality with the League presenting its requests and the reasons for them and the government representatives promising to give them consideration at the appropriate time. But the verbatim reports of earlier deputations suggest that such meetings, particularly those held in camera, are not all conducted, to use the words of the R.S.L.'s first official historian, 'on the lines of a "Sunday School conversazione"'. 25
Indirect Tactics

Although successive national leaders of the R.S.L. have stated their emphatic preference for direct tactics and have placed primary emphasis on direct pressure, the organization has often employed indirect methods. Attempts have been made to exert indirect pressure on the Commonwealth government through the enlistment of support from a variety of sources. Back-bench and Opposition parliamentarians, administrative officials, the press, other organizations, and the general public have been appealed to in hopes of turning League demands into public issues which must be weighed in the political calculations of the government.

Indirect methods have always been employed haphazardly. They have always been used as the result of frustration with a real or anticipated lack of results from direct representations. Successive national leaders of the R.S.L. have only sanctioned the use of indirect methods when they felt there was no alternative. This has rarely occurred with regard to repatriation matters but has been the case somewhat more frequently where matters affecting Australian security were concerned. Until very recently, employment of indirect pressure directed at the Commonwealth government was usually the result of a deliberate defiance of presidential policy by branch leaders who were dissatisfied with the lack of branch participation at the national level and with an apparent lack of success from the tactics being employed by the national headquarters. Hence the question of indirect pressure was at the centre of the R.S.L.'s domestic problems for many years, with those who believed strongly in direct methods claiming that the tactics advocated by their critics were too aggressive and undiplomatic, and tended to do more harm than good. There has been a widening range of indirect
Indirect Tactics
approaches to the Commonwealth government in more recent years, sanctioned from the national level.

Parliamentarians
Although members of the League have often denied that the organization does any lobbying, the R.S.L. has in fact often made attempts to influence government decisions through use of individual parliamentarians. Successive National Presidents, it is true, have expressed distaste for 'lobbying' in its literal sense, and after interviewing members of Parliament in 1948 Eric Millhouse declared:

Random lobbying in Canberra is something I sincerely hope will never again be done by the League.

I cannot conceive of anything more degrading than for representatives of a large national organization, with international affiliation, buttonholing members (sometimes perfect strangers) in the precincts of Parliament House and impressing upon them the League's views on matters affecting ex-service-men and women and their dependants.¹

But even while saying this, Millhouse admitted the need to maintain pressure 'steadily month by month' by 'concentrating on local members in their electorates'.² Certainly, a considerable amount of contact between the League at all levels and individual federal parliamentarians has always existed. Aided by the very considerable returned soldier representation in the Commonwealth Parliament³ as well as by general sympathy with the problems of ex-servicemen by politicians who did not see service abroad, it has ensured the League support in parliamentary discussions at the federal level.

Many of the League's attempts to enlist the assistance of federal parliamentarians in its campaigns for policy alterations by the Commonwealth government have been of a very general nature, consisting of nothing more than informing the federal members of League policy. For example, it has been the practice of the national headquarters, during the last decade, to forward a copy of the League's annual report to every senator and member of the House of Representatives. Most of the branches send copies of their official journals
to political representatives from their states. This is done with a general hope that the recipients might give support to League requests during parliamentary discussions.

Most national leaders of the League have also tried to ensure that generally good and friendly relations are maintained with members from both sides of Parliament. This policy was adopted in the early 1920s, under Dyett, because of the President's fears that the League had become too closely identified with the Nationalists during and immediately after the war, and was maintained under Millhouse. It flagged somewhat during the mid-1950s but the earlier situation was restored in 1961 after the then new National Secretary, A. G. W. Keys, in a memo to the National President (9 Oct. 1961) complained about the lack of contact with the 'people in the Federal opposition who are interested in ex-service matters'.

In addition to maintaining general contact with parliamentarians on both sides of the House and Senate, the support of these same persons has often been solicited on specific issues.

The Circular Letter

Federal parliamentarians have often been contacted by the national headquarters or by a branch or sub-branch with a circular letter. Use of this tactic on a matter of national policy first occurred in 1923, during an attempt to forestall retrenchments in the Commonwealth Public Service. E. Turnbull, who was acting Federal President at the time, asked all state branches to encourage their sub-branches to pass resolutions of protest and to forward these on to their federal political representatives.

No subsequent record of the use of a circular appears until the 1928 campaign for appeal tribunals. New South Wales requested that a circular be sent by the national headquarters to all federal parliamentarians. Dyett refused, saying that he wished to refrain from resorting to any action that may be inwardly resented by the Government, and in this case, by the other parties in the Federal House.4
Indirect Tactics

The branch then took the matter into their own hands and issued a circular letter from the state headquarters.

Although Dyett remained hesitant about open contact with parliamentarians this tactic was twice adopted at the national level during the Depression. In 1931, during the campaign to prevent a reduction in pensions, Dyett authorized the sending of telegrams to all members of the Federal Parliament asking for their opinions on the proposed reductions and followed this up by requesting that all branches forward resolutions of protest to their state premiers and to the Prime Minister, and further, that they 'arrange for the sub-branches . . . to pass a similar resolution' for forwarding to local members. Similarly, in 1933, an attempt was made to appeal to ordinary parliamentarians when a circular letter was sent by the national headquarters to all federal parliamentarians urging support for an increased defence effort.

Despite its use during the Depression, Dyett never really favoured the circular letter approach to parliamentarians, particularly from the national headquarters, and he ruled against such a move in 1932 when it was suggested with regard to retrenchment. Indeed, the circularization of parliamentarians was not again undertaken by or upon the direction of the federal headquarters until 1948 when the first League 'pension plan' was circulated. In that year the Federal Executive decided that

all members of the House of Representatives and the Senate should be forwarded a copy of the plan in order that members, irrespective of Party, should be fully aware of the League's repatriation requirements.

The plan and a covering letter were sent on 23 November 1948. Thereafter this became an established tactic of the League and was repeated annually. The presentation was widened in the mid-1950s with the full annual report, containing details of League policy, being sent to every member of the Federal Parliament.

Although the leaders of the League have come to accept the necessity of informing federal parliamentarians of their policy, any suggestions that they should go further in this
direction have been firmly rejected. ‘Lobbying’ in the United States manner has never been favoured by the leaders of the League and the one effort in this direction was never repeated. Nor has the organization adopted the type of pre-election or ‘ante-natal’ activity used by British ex-service organizations. Ante-natal attempts (to use Wootton’s term) to ‘influence the embryonic house during the course of a General Election’ have never been considered a legitimate task by the League. In 1953 the Tasmanian branch’s annual meeting carried a resolution from its Glenorchy sub-branch asking that a questionnaire be distributed to all federal election candidates soliciting their views and a pledge on repatriation policy, with an

intimation added to the effect that if such candidates fail to promise in writing to introduce and constantly support Bills to implement the desired legislation, the full voting strength of ex-servicemen will be effectively organized with the object of keeping them out of Parliament at the next Federal Election.

The resolution was ruled out of order at a meeting of the Federal Executive. Indeed, the closest the League has ever come to such activity was its decision to distribute a pamphlet during the 1949 election, entitled, *We Asked the Commonwealth Government and Now We Ask You*. The pamphlet outlined the League’s repatriation policy and closed with the hope that

you, with every other reader of this folder will take up the points raised with Federal Parliamentary members, and with candidates, urging their recognition and acceptance of the League’s requests.

Please . . . seize every opportunity of making this pamphlet the subject of discussion, private and public.

This one official entry into electoral politics was made at a time of extreme concern with pension rates, in circumstances which are not likely to be repeated. The contacting of elected members will undoubtedly continue, however. For example, in 1962, arrangements were made for all
Indirect Tactics
branches to ask their federal parliamentarians for views on the communist threat to Australia.

Of the three main types of circular letter which a group can employ—those which supply information, those which request action, and those which combine a request for action with a threat—the League has employed the first two types. Although in some cases a threat of action might seem to have been implied it would not appear that such has ever been explicitly intended.

Amendments in Parliament
Although on at least one occasion—during the 1922 attempt to secure an amendment to the C.P.S. Bill to provide for permanent appointment of returned servicemen without examination—the League arranged to have legislation introduced from the floor of Parliament, this tactic, whether in a direct attempt to secure legislation, or to draw attention to R.S.L. efforts at ministerial level, has not been favoured by the League. While there has undoubtedly been at least an indirect connection with such parliamentary activities as adjournment motions, the national leaders of the League seem to have shied away from parliamentary connections at this level.

Parliamentary Questions
While numerous questions about ex-service matters are asked in Parliament, few of these are asked at the direct instigation of the R.S.L.'s national headquarters. Successive National Presidents and Secretaries, in fact, have only employed the parliamentary question as a tactic on rare occasions. For example, the National Secretary, during 1963, arranged for the asking of one question. During the last hours of the winter session one member agreed to ask the government for its reaction to the League's 1963 defence 'plan'. The Secretary felt that some official comment was imperative before Parliament went into recess. A lack of formal records make quantifiable data impossible to produce, but interviews with former leaders, and the League's correspondence and other files, indicate that there have been few direct requests
from the headquarters for the asking of parliamentary questions.

The various state branches have arranged for parliamentary questions with about the same frequency as the national headquarters. The South Australian branch, for example, had only one question asked during 1963. Senator Nancy Buttfield asked a question regarding communism in Australia. (Some branches have used this tactic more frequently at the state parliamentary level—particularly where state branch leaders are members of state Parliaments.) In the first quarter of 1964 three questions were asked in the state legislature at the instigation of the South Australian secretary. But most branches have been hesitant about arranging questions because of a fear that this might unduly antagonize the government and hamper cordial relations at the direct level. In Victoria the state president must give his personal approval before arrangements for a question can be made.

This, of course, is not to say that there is no connection between the League and many of the questions on ex-service matters asked in the Commonwealth Parliament. Many are obviously prompted by statements made or material supplied by the League. Others reflect contact between parliamentarians and sub-branches in their electorates. At the national level in the League, however, the parliamentary question would seem to have remained merely a convenient means of raising a matter or eliciting information on infrequent occasions. Most of the information required by the League can, of course, be gathered from other sources and as the South Australian branch secretary phrased it: 'the question is not important but it's sometimes handy'. Certainly the League is extremely careful at all levels not to use questions to embarrass the government.

Parliamentary Representatives

Discussion of the parliamentary question does lead to consideration of League 'representatives' in Parliament. Although the British practice of individual parliamentarians having 'official or recognized connexions ...'10 with groups has never been established in Australia, there have been, over
Indirect Tactics

the years, men who have acted in this capacity for the R.S.L. Some have had links with the national headquarters, others with particular branches. Some of the latter have, in fact, represented the views of the individual branches in opposition to the policy being put forward by the national headquarters.

National headquarters representatives. There has usually been a small number of men in the House and Senate whose ties with the national headquarters of the League have been very close. During the 1920s and 1930s R. J. Burchell (Nationalist, Fremantle), C. W. C. Marr (Nationalist, Parkes), D. C. Cameron (Nationalist, Brisbane), R. P. Blundell (Nationalist, Adelaide), and Senators C. H. Brand (U.A.P., Vic.), T. W. Glasgow (Nationalist, Q'land), and Burford Sampson (Nationalist, Tas.) were in close contact with the national headquarters. Burchell and Cameron were both prominent leaders of R.S.L. branches. Burchell was a West Australian branch vice-president and Cameron a member of the Queensland branch managing council. As early as 1922 we find the latter questioning the government as to whether it intended 'to give effect to the representations of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League ... for increased pensions ...' In February 1926 he interviewed the Postmaster-General on behalf of the national headquarters. In March 1931 he asked the Minister for Markets, C. E. Culley,

Whether he has received representations from the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia urging that the rates of repayments on war service homes be reduced. ... Burchell many times raised matters on behalf of the League. Speaking during debate on the War Service Homes Bill in 1920 he based his arguments on the fact that he was 'one of the vice-presidents for Australia of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League. ...' Later in the same debate he asked the government to give effect to R.S.L. policy on war service homes because the whole matter 'has received mature consideration by the executive of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League. ...' Senator Glasgow, a member of the League's Federal
Executive, acted as a League-chosen mediator in the 1923 dispute over the Ryan appointment. C. W. C. Marr interviewed the acting Chairman of the Commonwealth Public Service Board on behalf of the League in November 1925 during attempts to secure appointments under Section 84 (9) (c) of the C.P.S. Act. (R. P. Blundell’s role in the 1922 amendment of the C.P.S. Act has already been noted.) Burford Sampson’s name appears in League files on several occasions, conveying information which he had collected for the League after private inquiries. In 1926 he suggested to the mover of an Opposition amendment to the Repatriation Bill, that

the best course for him to take to help the person he had in mind is to refer the matter to the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League, of which I am proud to be a member. If the claim has any substance in it, the officers of the league will press it until justice is done.

Sampson was a personal friend of General Secretary, J. Webster; both men were Tasmanians and members of the Launceston sub-branch.

A number of other men gave the League’s national headquarters parliamentary assistance on occasion. Dr W. Maloney (A.L.P., Melbourne), was a personal friend of G. J. C. Dyett, and Senator H. S. Foll (Nationalist, Queensland) and T. W. W. White (Nationalist, Balaclava) were both in contact with the League during their terms as back-benchers in the 1920s.

Since World War II national headquarters’ contact in Parliament, of the type mentioned above, has decreased. Although successive National Secretaries have taken steps to maintain informal and friendly contact with members on both sides of Parliament, there have been few special associations of the type which formerly existed between the national headquarters and back-bench parliamentarians. The present Secretary, A. G. W. Keys, feels that this course of action has resulted from a strong feeling amongst some leaders in the state branches that the League should avoid contact with
parliamentarians for fear of involving the organization in party-political conflict.

**State branch representatives.** A number of federal parliamentarians have been open and avowed spokesmen for individual state branches of the League. P. E. Coleman (A.L.P., Reid), R. F. H. Green (C.P., Richmond), D. C. Cameron (Nationalist, Brisbane), Josiah Francis (Nationalist, Moreton), Senator H. B. Collett (U.A.P., W.A.), Senator E. W. Mattner (Liberal, S.A.), and Senator K. C. Wilson (Liberal, S.A.) are the most notable examples. Coleman and Green were both district representatives on the New South Wales branch's state council during their terms of political office. Coleman acted as the branch's spokesman during the 1928 tribunal dispute—in fact, he claimed that he had been responsible for the initiation of the idea. Speaking during the budget debate in 1927 about the lack of automobiles being provided for amputees he claimed that 'My protest is endorsed by the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League, of which I have the honour to be a member.' W. J. Stagg, secretary of the New South Wales branch (1922-9), asserts that Coleman was their most consistent parliamentary advocate and that he was in constant contact with the state headquarters.

Green based many of his parliamentary addresses on R.S.L. policy. In 1926, when criticizing an Opposition suggestion regarding disability acceptance, he noted that

I am a member of the council of the league in New South Wales, and at a recent meeting . . . at which the motion was discussed, no member was in favour of it . . . I also discussed it with the Federal executive . . . and that body also expressed disapproval.

D. C. Cameron and Josiah Francis were both leading members of the Queensland branch of the R.S.L. Francis was a sub-branch president and member of the state council. He supported the move for an appeal tribunal because 'it was desired by the Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League of Australia.' On at least two occasions during World
The Politics of Patriotism

War II he based parliamentary statements or questions on League policy.24

Senator H. B. Collett was president of the West Australian branch prior to his entry into federal politics. During a 1944 Brand adjournment motion on preference he quoted the West Australian branch's policy on preference25 and when the League was criticized in the Senate in 1945 by Senator Keane, the Minister for Trade and Customs, Collett defended the R.S.L. and noted that 'I have been an active member of the organization for 26 years and have worked on the executive of the League in Western Australia for a long period. . . .'26

Senator Mattner stoutly defended the League in 1957 against allegations that it was controlled by an 'officer branch'. During debate on the National Service Training Bill he claimed that the League was 'one of the most democratic associations in which I have ever participated'.27 Mattner was formerly a state councillor of the South Australian branch. He chose to walk out of the House of Representatives during the 1957 debate on national service training rather than be forced to vote with the government to abolish this form of military service. His action was interpreted in South Australia as being due to his connection with the League.28 But despite the numerous links which exist between the R.S.L. and federal parliamentarians, since Bolton's defeat in 1919 the League has never had a recognized representative in the sense that Sir Ian Fraser represented the British Legion through simultaneous occupancy of the presidency of the Legion and a position in Parliament. In fact, informal pressure within the R.S.L. has always been opposed to senior officials holding parliamentary positions.

Administrative Officials

The national leaders of the R.S.L., as well as leaders at the branch level, have always been in close contact with officials in the departments administering matters with which the organization is concerned. Such contact has, in fact, been encouraged from the departmental and ministerial side since the Repatriation Departments, in particular, require the good-
Indirect Tactics

will and assistance of the R.S.L. to facilitate their own efficient operation. It is not unusual to find departmental officials supplying the League with material to facilitate the League’s pressure group activities. In 1950, Mr S. Lucas, Director of the War Service Homes Division, noted in a report prepared for the League’s annual report, that

An endeavour has been made during the year to inform Division and State members of the R.S.S. & A.I.L.A. as to the nature of the War Service Homes Division so that resolutions submitted at State and Federal Congress will be on a sounder basis.29

On the other hand, while the League has taken full advantage of its good relations with various departments when gathering information to support representations at the ministerial level, there are no records of open attempts to influence ministers through their public servants. Such officials are certainly made aware of League policy and the reasons for it but in the minds of the R.S.L.’s leaders the fear of jeopardizing relations at ministerial level seems to have outweighed considerations of short-term gain.

There has only been one occasion on which the League has actually drawn up a draft bill and this was in 1943 with regard to preference. The organization has never been involved in attempts to influence legislation at the drafting stage.

Political Parties

The League has never had any direct official contact with the various Australian political parties. A policy prohibiting such contact has been rigidly enforced by successive national leaders and adamantly demanded by leaders at state and local level. Indeed, in response to one of the few suggestions of this nature, in 1925, the General Secretary stated unequivocally ‘it is not the policy of the League, nor has it been, to communicate with heads of political organizations’.30

There is, of course, some indirect contact. There is inevitable overlapping membership, even if only taken at the most obvious level—that of members of the Commonwealth Parlia-
ment. There are some indications that on occasion steps have been taken to ensure that an item of policy being pressed by the League is raised in political party policy discussions but such deliberate attempts would seem to be both rare and unnecessary in view of the topicality of most items of interest to the League. Approaches by party representatives to the R.S.L. always meet with firm rebuffs and while dealing with parliamentarians the League has never addressed a party caucus nor had anything to do with the Government and Opposition ex-servicemen’s committees of the Commonwealth Parliament.

Other Organizations

Although the ‘aims and objects’ of the League as set out in the organization's constitution include a pledge to ‘affiliate with any other body having like aims, membership, and/or objects upon such terms and conditions as may be mutually agreed upon’, nationally the League has shown little desire to combine with any of the hundred or so other ex-service organizations in Australia in attempts to influence Commonwealth government policy. We have already noted how, during World War I, the League's leaders were extremely careful not to associate with various other ex-service organizations. This policy was followed whenever possible in the years that followed. In 1951 the National Executive's annual report set out the reasons for such policy in some detail. The report stated that the League had never joined and would never ‘join other organizations in forming a combined Federal Council . . . to amalgamate ex-service organizations’ because

League policy must be framed and implemented by its own members and cannot be adjusted to accord with the desires of other organizations . . . in the event of a vote being taken on a contentious matter the League, despite its numerical superiority of membership, would invariably be outvoted.91

The report then went on to point out that this had happened when they had agreed to hold a combined meeting in September 1945 to discuss the Re-Establishment and Employment Bill. The conference had ended by being hopelessly split.
Indirect Tactics

'The League, strong enough to stand on its own feet, has everything to gain by refraining from combining with such groups... This same policy led the Federal President to criticize West Australia when that branch combined with several organizations in putting forward pension claims. G. W. Holland, acting Federal President, notified the branch president that

A joint approach in any one State, such as that which is suggested... might create not only difficulty but controversy in that the R.S.L. is not in a position on such occasions to control the spokesmen of other organizations.32

As the largest, by far, of Australia's ex-service organizations, the League has always been able to remain aloof and independent from the others, and has preferred to do so. Occasions of open co-operation in the making of representations have been exceedingly rare. The General Secretary did accompany the Federal President of the Australian Legion of Ex-servicemen and Women on an approach to the Repatriation Minister about increased pensions in 1950. The only other occasion on record of such an approach being planned was in 1934 when Dyett was to accompany H. S. Gullett and representatives of the T.P.I., Limbless, Blinded, and Partially Blinded Associations to a meeting with Lyons. Dyett finally decided not to go to the meeting, although he did give the deputation a signed statement of support for their representations on preference.

The League has cordial relations with all the other ex-service organizations. The leaders attend one another's annual meetings. The League sponsored the formation of the Partially Blinded Association and has put forward matters on behalf of some of the other groups. The disability organizations, in fact, occasionally make representations to the League in attempts to persuade the R.S.L. to adopt their separate policies on specific repatriation matters as part of the general policy of the League. Such contact has been limited since the League's refusal to joint the Commonwealth Council of Disabled Soldiers' Associations after the war. The second largest ex-service group, the 60,000-member Aus-
The Australian Legion of Ex-servicemen and Women, was set up after World War II when the R.S.L. refused to extend its membership eligibility to cover non-returned servicemen. The policies of the two bodies are generally similar on both repatriation and national affairs although there is relatively little contact between them.33

The League has frequently accepted assistance from sympathetic organizations. In 1928, to support arguments in favour of accelerated building of war service homes, and to counter government claims that there was a shortage of materials and tradesmen, the national headquarters secured letters of support for its case from the Sydney and Suburban Timber Merchants’ Association, the Master Builders’ Association of New South Wales, and the Institute of Architects of New South Wales.34

During the 1934 campaign for a service pension unsolicited support was received from the Farmers and Settlers’ Association of New South Wales. In this case the Association’s general secretary, W. C. Cambridge, was informed that the League felt that the Association could best render assistance if it were to make separate representations to the government on similar lines to those of the League.35

The policy demonstrated in the above case has continued, with the national leaders of the League preferring that when other groups wish to support the League they do so by making separate representations to the government. In February 1964, when support in the organization’s campaign for increased defence expenditure was received from the Defend Australia League, the Executive approved the National Secretary’s action in informing the League that ‘while the R.S.L. was pleased to see any moves towards encouraging greater defence effort it felt more would be achieved by proceeding with its policy independently’.36

Although on a few occasions in the past the League openly solicited the support of other organizations, the national headquarters has always hesitated to take such action and even when it was deemed imperative preferred to leave such steps up to the branches. Dyett's directive to the branches during the campaign against a reduction in pension rates is
Indirect Tactics

an example. He asked the branches to

secure the adoption of similar resolutions [of protest] by
kindred and patriotic bodies, including, of course, the Limbless,
T.B., Blind, Widows and Widowed Mothers and such associa-
tions.37

This precedent was broken with the decision to increase
activity on the League’s anti-communist campaign in 1961.
When the decision was made to launch a public campaign,
the National Secretary was authorized to appeal to other
organizations for support. He wrote to twenty-six public
bodies ranging from trade unions to employers’ organizations
and from service clubs to churches.38

Self-Produced Publicity Material

The League has always produced a certain amount of pub-
licity material itself. With the exception of Papua-New
Guinea, every branch has sponsored an official journal at
some time. The journals have never had wide circulation,
however, even within the League,39 and those in South
Australia and Tasmania ceased publication some time ago.
Queensland’s Digger has been re-named Vigilance and, in
a much reduced size, now also faces extinction. The New
South Wales branch’s Reveille has weathered successive
storms and is now the only journal operating at a profit. In
Victoria, Mufti has been altered from a booklet-tabloid form
to a broadsheet and operates at a loss. The Listening Post in
Western Australia is a tabloid on newsprint and also operates
at a loss. Stand-To is officially the journal of the A.C.T.
branch, but in fact it is a journal concerned with war history
and operated largely as a private venture on a small scale by
a few members of the branch. Stand-To and Vigilance come
out every two months. The other journals are all monthly
publications.

Some material has been produced by the national head-
quarters from time to time to aid with specific attempts to
secure implementation of League demands, but efforts in this
direction have never received much emphasis. The League’s
war and postwar policy was circulated in a small pamphlet
in 1943, as was the organization’s draft preference bill. This introduction was followed in 1949, during attempts to secure increased pensions, by the production of the pamphlet, *We Asked the Commonwealth Government and Now We Ask You*. Two hundred and fifty thousand copies of this booklet were distributed during and immediately after the election campaign of 1949. In 1959 production began of annual graphs for general distribution showing the relative value of war pensions. A booklet, *Subversion: The R.S.L. Case Against Communism in Australia*, was produced for the anti-communist campaign in 1962-3.

Some of the branches have produced similar material occasionally but such attempts to gain publicity to assist the organization’s pressure group activities have been few in number.

*The Public Media*

The League’s external publicity arrangements have always been haphazard. No effective organization-wide publicity system has ever been developed and arrangements within individual branches have been, with few exceptions, amateurish and inconsistent. The federal structure and nature of the League has always prevented the development of an effective public relations system which could be of real use in attempts to ensure implementation of League policy, and the structural problems have been complicated by the fact that the publicity problem is one of relatively recent vintage. Such material as is produced nationally comes from the pen of an already overworked National Secretary. Nor has there ever been a national journal. Although several National Presidents have pleaded for ‘favourable consideration to the setting up of a national journal in order that the Federal Executive may have an effective medium of propaganda’, such a journal has never been established.

The national headquarters of the League has always issued material in the form of press releases prepared by the National Secretary and issued after consultation with the President (or on rare occasions the National Executive). When the headquarters was situated in Melbourne, press releases were issued
to the various correspondents located in that city. This
practice, however, was altered in 1947 because it was felt
that too many important items had been cut down. The
practice was adopted of sending roneoed releases to the state
branches for issue in their respective capital cities to the major
newspapers. Even this was not found to be satisfactory, how­
ever, and the expedient of issue in the parliamentary press
gallery in Canberra was attempted. Press statements were
sent to a League member in the capital who distributed
them in the press gallery. This practice was followed after
transfer of the headquarters to Canberra. In recent years it
has been backed up by secondary distribution at the state
branch level when it has been judged that inadequate pub­
licity has been gained from the initial distribution.

The National Secretary—or indeed any other officer of the
League for that matter—gives interviews to the press when­
ever requested.

In most of the branches the practice has been similar to
that adopted by the national headquarters, although South
Australia has employed a public relations officer on a part­
time basis in recent years and New South Wales appointed
a full-time publicity officer in early 1965. The others have,
from time to time, co-opted the services of qualified League
members. Victoria conducted a weekly press conference for a
number of years but discontinued the practice when the
branch administration had difficulty in finding items of suffi­
cient interest to the newspapers and when it was felt that
the expenditure on refreshments outweighed the gain in
publicity.

The practice with radio and television has been similar
to that with newspapers. Some sub-branches (it is impossible
to ascertain a definite figure) have weekly ‘Diggers’ Sessions’
on local radio stations but these are seldom oriented toward
the organization’s pressure group activities. Time for the
promotion of League activities has never been purchased.

The Public Campaign

Although there were some halting efforts in this direction
during the campaign for increased defence expenditure in
the years preceding World War II, it has only been since World War II, and particularly since 1960, that the R.S.L. has deliberately promoted public campaigns designed to bring indirect pressure to bear by making a League demand so topical that the issue must register on the government's political consciousness. In 1949 'Anti-Communist Month' was declared and the branches and sub-branches were encouraged to work up publicity, and the most concerted attempts have come with reference to anti-communism, national service training, and defence generally, since 1960. Conscious efforts have been made to turn League demands into public issues. And, in addition, these efforts have had their effect on the League's repatriation activities, with more attention being paid to indirect pressure. The individual techniques have remained halting and somewhat haphazard, but, for the first time, deliberate attempts to launch public campaigns have been made.

Comment

The R.S.L.'s disorganized, haphazard, and half-hearted attempts to exert indirect pressure on the Commonwealth government can be contrasted with the activities of other pressure groups. V. O. Key notes how the American Legion, through its local branches, can 'lay down a formidable bombardment of telegrams and letters on Congress'. The League's production of publicity material by an over-worked National Secretary under the severe budgetary restrictions dictated by the League's financial structure can be contrasted with the £38,000 allotted by the Associated Chambers of Manufactures for the operation of its Canberra office in 1960-1, and with the American Medical Association's campaign against the Truman national health insurance programme. Directed by a publicity firm called 'Campaigns Inc.', it cost a total of $4,678,000 over a period of three years, of which $775,000 was spent for 'propaganda skills'.

The relative lack of development of the League's skill in ensuring the exertion of indirect pressure reflects several factors bound up with the organization's structure and environment. The League's federal structure has always hampered
Indirect Tactics

the employment of indirect tactics at the national level. While often complaining about the organization's lack of success with direct representations, the branches have never been willing to allow centralized co-ordination of publicity. At the same time, their preoccupation with political and benevolent questions at state level has precluded them from providing co-ordinated support when it was desired. Even more important has been the fact that the League's privileged position of direct access to the Commonwealth government has prompted opposition to indirect methods by successive National Presidents and Secretaries. They have believed that the organization's direct representations from a privileged position would be of the most value in the long run and have feared that use of 'aggressive' indirect methods might jeopardize the R.S.L.'s position and effectiveness.

Also important has been the fact that a favourable environment has assured the League of a vast amount of press, parliamentary, and public support, without the necessity for active solicitation. The organization has received ample press publicity without much effort—the Ryan case provided a good example—and the organization's supporters in Parliament have usually come forward voluntarily and have not needed recruitment. Parliamentarians have always kept in touch with the sub-branches in their electorates, and ex-servicemen generally, if not the R.S.L. specifically, have always received support from many parliamentarians who have had no connection with the League at national or branch level. In addition, the League has been able to count upon a vast reservoir of public sympathy because of its connection with the strong national myths and traditions which have grown up around Australian participation in two world wars.

It is interesting, however, that at a time when the League's direct access has been confirmed to the point of formalization there has come a steady growth of interest in the use of indirect pressure. As the League's relative size in the community has diminished since World War II, the organization has come increasingly to depend upon methods which were once not considered wise. It would appear that this trend will continue.
Assessment of Effectiveness

Objective assessment of pressure group effectiveness is a difficult task and although there has long been general public agreement about the R.S.L.'s effectiveness it seems necessary to examine this point in some detail. Few of the assessments of League effectiveness have been accompanied by any evidence and there should certainly be some reservations placed on the claim, for example, that 'every benefit that ex-servicemen and their dependants now enjoy was brought about by the representations and influence of the League'.

Finer has asked 'whether it is even desirable to try and measure the influence of groups', and has indicated some of the difficulties.

There are two chief difficulties in the way of such measurement, one of which is statistical and the other philosophical. As to the first . . . we have no quantitative index of power or pressure. As to the second, it is very hard to find any scientific proof that a particular measure is due to the particular pressure of a specific group . . . sometimes many groups exercise pressure simultaneously and it proves impossible to identify which of the many pressures was the effective one.

In *British Pressure Groups* (p. 239), Stewart has pointed to the same problems, and Wootton in *The Politics of Influence* (p. 231), has noted, only a little less pessimistically, that 'There is no more difficult question in the whole pressure-group catechism.' But while the problems are undeniable, the desirability of making some assessment of effectiveness is equally apparent. The methodological problems are common to all the social sciences and even if strict mathematical assessment is impossible, it does seem desirable, if only to help comparative study of pressure groups, to attempt some less sophisticated estimation.
Assessment of Effectiveness

Both Wootton and Eckstein, in the two most recent pressure group case studies, separate an assessment of effectiveness from consideration of determinants, and such a course of action seems unavoidable. Instead of attempting to measure causation in individual cases of group pressure, a more rewarding result can be achieved by separating an assessment of effectiveness in terms of the ratio between organizational demands and governmental activity and general consideration of the factors which have contributed to pressure group success.

Wootton devotes some time to assessing the effectiveness of the British Legion. He concludes, while noting the limitations of his methods and of the comparative material available, that the Legion 'ranks high in the universe of British pressure groups'. The Legion, he says (pp. 243-4), has enjoyed 'a substantial degree of success', wherein 'the important successes . . . outnumbered the important failures'. He bases his conclusions on an examination of 'outstandingly important issues' during several periods in the organization's history. Eckstein, on the other hand, examines the effectiveness of the B.M.A. in terms of various types of issues over a more limited period.

One may be led to conclude [he says in Pressure Group Politics (p. 96)] that on the big issues the B.M.A. has proved extraordinarily impotent. But this would be a hasty and ill-advised conclusion. . . . Behind the record of public failures is a much more impressive record of not-so-public successes, greatest of all on minor matters . . . but impressive enough also in the case of principles.

There are hazards and merits in both approaches and the best method of assessing effectiveness would seem to lie in avoiding both the problem of emphasis which arises because pressure groups are more effective at some times than at others, and the problems which are inherent in an examination of only one type of issue amongst the several in which a group can be interested. Unless, of course, the intention is to study only one period in the organization's history, the most desirable course of action would seem to be to make
The Politics of Patriotism

the period of assessment as long as possible. In addition, effectiveness should be assessed with regard to the various types of issue in which the organization is interested. By paying separate attention to (a) pressure group success with regard to demands involving fundamental or innovatory questions, (b) those involving more favourable movement within the ambit of established policy, and (c) those of an administrative nature, a more detailed picture can be given. In the case of the R.S.L., further accuracy demands that separate consideration within each category be given to repatriation matters and to those involving questions of a more general nature.

In no case, of course, can a complete catalogue of organizational successes and failures be drawn up. In the first place, the sheer physical task of compiling a full list of a pressure group's demands and of determining whether they have been implemented, formally or informally, in whole or in part, by legislation, regulation, or practice, is one of monumental proportions. Secondly, such a list would not take account of differences in the priority which the pressure group places on its separate demands. However, even if a comprehensive compilation is not possible, a less ambitious examination can produce helpful results.

Fundamental Demands

Repatriation Matters

Until 1919 the R.S.L. was not really an effective factor in repatriation decision-making. While one of a number of voices crying for adequate treatment of returned servicemen, the organization's leaders were more concerned with establishing the League on a firm basis than with detailed questions of policy. Hence, most of the foundations of the repatriation system, of pensions and medical care, war service homes, soldier settlement, and employment preference, were laid without direct reference to the League. From 1919, however, the situation changed very rapidly. The League, as the largest and most active ex-service organization in Australia, became a
Assessment of Effectiveness

very definite factor in decision-making on all aspects of repatriation.

Fundamental demands are somewhat akin to Wootton’s ‘outstandingly important’ issues, although not always of great magnitude in financial terms. They are demands which require a government decision on principle. In other words, they can range from the 1919 request for a gratuitous payment to all members of the 1st A.I.F. to the more recent request that the term ‘compensation’ be substituted for ‘pension’ in repatriation legislation. There is no practicable way in which a full list of R.S.L. demands of this type can be compiled and checked, but on many very important issues the League has been completely successful. During consideration of the organization’s history several matters of this type were dealt with in some detail. The League demands for a gratuity in 1919, for a three-man commission to administer repatriation, for independent pension appeal tribunals, and for the service pension, all provide examples. Of less magnitude but no less fundamental importance was the R.S.L.’s success in getting a reduced standard examination for returned servicemen who wished to enter the Commonwealth Public Service, a provision for advancement of returned servicemen from temporary to permanent positions in the Commonwealth Public Service without the necessity of examination, a Depression moratorium on payments to the Custodian of Enemy Property by returned soldier settlers in New Guinea, the provision, in 1949, of remuneration for time lost by ex-servicemen when attending for repatriation treatment or interviews, and the granting, in 1958, of virtually comprehensive medical care for all returned nurses from World War I. This latter concession by the Commonwealth followed many years of personal representations by the League’s Federal President, Sir George Holland, and continuous representations by the League’s repatriation sub-committee. Free medical care for service pensioners also followed League representations. Both were of considerable importance since they established a precedent for medical treatment of the non-war-caused disabilities of other returned service personnel.

A further measure of the League’s effectiveness on matters
The Politics of Patriotism involving a decision on principle by the Commonwealth can be gained from perusal of a list of twenty-two ‘milestones’ in the Repatriation Department’s first nineteen years of operation. This list, drawn up by the department’s unofficial historian, contains thirteen matters of the type under consideration. In every one of these thirteen cases the League had made representations on behalf of the item concerned before its implementation by the government.3

The League has not, of course, always been successful. But in many cases where the Commonwealth has refused to concede the principle demanded by the R.S.L. it has been willing to compromise—often effecting the result originally desired by the League. For example, while refusing, during the Depression, to grant a moratorium on war service homes payments by widows—on the reasonable grounds that all widows were not undergoing hardship—the Commonwealth agreed to give sympathetic consideration to all individual cases put forward by the League. Similarly, while the government has steadfastly refused to inaugurate a system whereby a wife could automatically receive her husband’s war service home, free of encumbrance, upon his death, a Widows’ Relief Scheme has long been in operation within the War Service Homes Division to provide the desired result in cases of hardship.

There have been, of course, outright failures. Attempts to get preference in promotion for returned servicemen in the Commonwealth Public Service were never successful, nor were the efforts aimed at securing a provision for advancement from temporary to permanent status in the Commonwealth Public Service, without examination, for members of the 2nd A.I.F. In the first case, however, the demand was, after a few years, put forward only formally while the desired end was partly achieved by other means. Attention was concentrated on securing a generous measure of ante-dating of seniority to include war service. This was of benefit to returned men since Commonwealth Public Service promotion, to a large extent, depended upon seniority. There are, in fact, very few examples of demands which the League leaders felt strongly were being absolutely rejected.
Assessment of Effectiveness

Indeed, the organization's success as far as returned soldier preference has been concerned might be measured by the often vocal complaints about, and undoubted fact of, a harmful effect on the efficiency of the Commonwealth Public Service resulting from successful R.S.L. pressure for preferential treatment to returned men. On matters of lesser importance the organization, upon realizing that success was unlikely, usually dropped the matter or else switched emphasis so as to attain the same end by other means. Probably the most unsuccessful period in the organization's history came during World War II when, although the eventual provisions made for the men of the 2nd A.I.F. were both comprehensive and generous, many of the League's demands about the details of repatriation were ignored or rejected. It was unable to persuade the Commonwealth to take over complete control of soldier settlement or to provide the maximum gratuity for all men with overseas service for both their periods overseas and their service in Australia.

There have been fewer battles over matters of a fundamental nature in recent years. The main outlines of the repatriation system have been well established and other matters have been given priority. Several matters of considerable importance are being pressed at the moment—particularly demands for free medical care for all illnesses for all veterans of World War I and for automatic acceptance of cancer as a war-caused disability—but it remains to be seen whether the League will be successful or not.

National Affairs

The League's effectiveness with regard to its demands on defence, anti-communism, and immigration has been on a different scale from repatriation matters. Over the years the organization has made a number of demands involving acceptance by the Commonwealth of a new principle. For example, on various occasions attempts have been made to ensure a guaranteed annual allotment of finance for defence. But requests that a fixed proportion of national revenue be allocated for defence, by Act of Parliament, have met with firm rebuffs. Similarly, the League's request for a national govern-
The Politics of Patriotism

ment during World War II never received approval. Not all of the organization's defence demands, however, have been rejected. Some of the many requests for the establishment of new military bases or for development of strategic resources have eventually been included in Commonwealth defence planning, as have requests for improvement in service conditions within the armed forces. The request that C.M.F. (militia) pay be exempted from income tax was first put to the government in 1949 and finally implemented in 1964. The Commonwealth accepted the organization's 1938 request for an A.I.F. reserve and the 1940 plan for the Volunteer Defence Corps. In three cases (1939, 1952, and 1964) the re-implementation of conscription has come after a succession of R.S.L. demands. It would appear, in fact, that about as many League defence demands have been accepted as have been rejected.

The R.S.L. has had little success, in terms of formal government action, where matters relating to internal security, and particularly to the question of anti-communism, have been concerned. Requests over the years for the suppression of propaganda from communists, fascists, republicans, and Jehovah's Witnesses, for the banning of the Australian Communist Party, for disciplinary action against conscientious objectors, and for action against striking unionists in wartime, have all been rebuffed at Commonwealth level. Not one of the organization's formal demands with regard to the Communist Party, since 1946, has received formal Commonwealth government approval although the Menzies government did make an attempt to ban the party and the request that known communists be prevented from entering the country seems to have been partly implemented in practice, if not formally.

On policy matters, the League efforts with regard to immigration have been largely of a defensive nature, bound up in attempts to conserve the British predominance in the ethnic composition of Australian society. For many years the League attempted, without success, to persuade the Commonwealth to cut off the flow of migrants from south-east Europe although agitation for a total ban on both these and ex-enemy migrants has been dropped in more recent years.
Assessment of Effectiveness

Extension of Established Policy

Repatriation

A large part of the League’s activity has always been directed towards ensuring progressive liberalization of existing repatriation benefits or of preventing any reduction in the scale of established benefits. An assessment of effectiveness in this direction cannot be made solely in terms of the relationship between the organization’s demands and Commonwealth activity because the leaders of the League generally ask for more than they expect to get. Their pressure, in fact, is usually not directed so much towards specific increases as towards progressive liberalization.

The pension rates established in 1920 were quite generous by comparison with those they replaced—even though they did not fully meet the official expectations of the R.S.L. The general rate stood at just over one-half of the prevailing average basic wage (average for six capitals) and the special rate was only 2s. less than the weekly basic wage rate. The war pension maximums of 42s. and 80s. respectively, compared more than favourably with the 15s. per week provision for civilian age and invalid pensioners. The advent of the economic depression with its lowered living costs, and the League’s successful campaign against a reduction in the basic rates of pension, meant that until World War II there was little need for upward pressure on pension rates. After the war, however, the situation altered considerably. The table on p. 194 indicates the fluctuation in war pension values by comparison with the Commonwealth basic wage and the age and invalid pensions.

The table points to the general decrease in war pension values during the late 1940s, their recovery in 1950, and their subsequent fall. It also indicates that after the three major reviews of pension rates, in 1920, 1943, and 1950, under both Labor and non-Labor governments, the general rate equalled about one-half of the prevailing Commonwealth basic wage while the special rate was about on par. At the present time, the general rate is worth only about 39 per cent of the basic wage while the special rate is worth about 92
The Politics of Patriotism

### TABLE IV

Comparative Value of Pension Rates: 1920-64

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>C.B.W. Six Capitals s/w* Index</th>
<th>General Rate s/w Index</th>
<th>Special Rate s/w Index</th>
<th>War Widow s/w Index</th>
<th>Old Age-Invalid and Service s/w Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>79 1</td>
<td>42 1</td>
<td>80 1</td>
<td>23·5 1</td>
<td>15 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>77 1</td>
<td>42 1</td>
<td>80 1</td>
<td>23·5 1</td>
<td>17·5 1·2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>65 0·8</td>
<td>42 1</td>
<td>80 1</td>
<td>23·5 1</td>
<td>19 1·3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>96 1·3</td>
<td>50 1·2</td>
<td>96 1·2</td>
<td>50 2·1</td>
<td>26·5 1·8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>109 1·4</td>
<td>50 1·2</td>
<td>101 1·3</td>
<td>55 2·4</td>
<td>37·5 2·5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>120 1·5</td>
<td>55 1·3</td>
<td>106 1·3</td>
<td>60 2·6</td>
<td>42·5 2·8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>138 1·8</td>
<td>70 1·7</td>
<td>140 1·8</td>
<td>70 2·98</td>
<td>50 3·3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>200 2·6</td>
<td>70 1·7</td>
<td>175 2·2</td>
<td>70 2·98</td>
<td>60 4·0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>235 3·0</td>
<td>82·6 1·96</td>
<td>185 2·3</td>
<td>72·5 3·1</td>
<td>70 4·7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>246 3·1</td>
<td>95 2·3</td>
<td>195 2·4</td>
<td>90 3·8</td>
<td>80 5·3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>261 3·3</td>
<td>102·5 2·4</td>
<td>230 2·9</td>
<td>97·5 4·1</td>
<td>87·5 5·8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>288 3·7</td>
<td>115 2·7</td>
<td>265 3·4</td>
<td>115 4·9</td>
<td>105 7·0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>308 3·9</td>
<td>120 2·9</td>
<td>285 3·6</td>
<td>120 5·1</td>
<td>120 8·0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Shillings per week

per cent. The war widow's pension has improved considerably in value and has been equalized with the general rate. While the age-invalid pension has increased to a greater extent than any of the others, this seems not so much a depreciation of the other rates as a recognition of the gross inadequacy of the civilian benefit. Part of the increase can, in fact, be attributed to R.S.L. pressure for service pension increases since, as was already noted, the service pension is the age-invalid pension given to returned servicemen earlier than to civilians. The first major increases in the age-invalid pension came after the establishment of the service pension in 1935. This rate now appears to have been equalized with the general rate.

Although the 1950 reassessment was substantially in line with the demands of the R.S.L. during the late 1940s, the organization has never realized its full demands since that time. The amount asked for each year was set by a rather haphazard method after 1950; however, it was very recently
Assessment of Effectiveness

(2 March 1965) decided by the National Executive's repatriation sub-committee that, as a principle, the organization should attempt to maintain the 1920-43-50 standard. While the loss of value indicates a decrease in League effectiveness since 1950 it must, in all fairness, be pointed out that without constant pressure from the League the gap between pension and basic wage values might have been greater than it is presently.

Progressive liberalization of the war service homes benefit has placed the ex-serviceman in a favourable position. Although the League is now (1965) asking for an increase in the maximum advance from its present £3,500 to £4,500, the last increase came as recently as 1962. The amount is the same as that generally prevailing from the Commonwealth to civilians (in the A.C.T.) and the interest rate, at 3½ per cent, is extremely favourable when compared with the civilian interest rate of 5½ per cent. There has been a steady increase and improvement of the war service homes benefit from the original provision of £700 at 5 per cent interest although one could argue that the 1920 loan of £800 went further towards covering the total cost of erecting a house than does today's benefit. In recent years the League has requested, successfully, that the annual budgetary allotment of £35 million be maintained despite decreased numbers of applicants. This has had the effect of reducing the waiting time for loans.

Although returned soldier preference has largely ceased to concern the League, it was once a major issue and preference was observed by successive Commonwealth governments for many years. The League at one time protested against every non-returned soldier appointment—including the appointment of W. J. (later Sir William) McKell as Governor-General of Australia! The effect of League protests was well demonstrated by the Ryan case and the 1930 preference dispute.

No comprehensive figures on preference have ever been compiled, but Professor Scott (Australia During the War, p. 854, n. 51) points out that in the Clerical Division of the Commonwealth Public Service, between 1919 and 1932, 924 of the 972 persons appointed to permanent positions were
The Politics of Patriotism

returned men. A total of 7,623 returned men were appointed to permanent positions in the Service between 1919 and 1941, constituting just over 21 per cent of the total permanent appointments. These figures do not include temporary employees or employees of the Repatriation and War Service Homes departments, and the latter were almost entirely staffed by returned men. Even though the League was never satisfied with the legislative provisions brought forward for the veterans of World War II, a sample survey of the composition of the service, taken in 1956, indicated that a substantial amount of preference had existed. The survey of 25,300 persons in the Third Division revealed that 15,300, or 60 per cent, were ex-servicemen and that of these 8,000 had entered the Service by taking advantage of the regulations relating to preference.5

National Affairs

An assessment of the R.S.L.'s effectiveness within the ambit of established policy on national affairs is quite difficult to make. On the one hand, the organization's loudest demands for increased defence expenditure have always come at a time when such expenditure was at a low ebb. Hence, an upward swing which has been to some extent inevitable has always accompanied League pressure. There has never been, on the other hand, a sharp and definite response to League demands in this field.

On immigration matters the League's main efforts have been directed towards ensuring the retention of the restrictive immigration (or White Australia) policy. Its effectiveness as a proponent of the policy has yet to be put to a serious test.

Administrative Matters

Repatriation

Since the League is directly concerned, on a very large scale, with the day-to-day operation of the legislation and regulations pertaining to repatriation, it is hardly surprising that numerous suggestions are made by the organization regarding detailed aspects of repatriation administration. These
Assessment of Effectiveness

suggestions do not involve questions of policy although some
do receive ministerial consideration.

A quantitative statement of the League's success in putting
forward matters of this kind cannot be made because many
of them are dealt with on an informal basis or handled
through the branch offices of the R.S.L. The Repatriation
Department, in fact, encourages the raising of administrative
problems at the state level in hopes that minor problems can
be solved before they become issues of importance. A similar
attitude has been adopted by the war service homes
authorities.

At least a partial illustration of effectiveness can be given
by an examination of the fate of the matters of this type
raised at the League's National Congress. Thirteen resolutions
involving the administration of repatriation and war service
homes legislation were considered on the agenda of the 1963
Congress. The requests embodied in three of these were
immediately granted by either the Chairman of the Repatria-
tion Commission or the Director of War Service Homes, each
of whom attends the annual meeting (resolutions 73, 79, 82).
Five were withdrawn by the initiating branch when the rele-
vant departmental officer pointed out that the demands were
already in operation (resolutions 40, 75, 87, 188). Two were
withdrawn after a promise that the matters raised would be
investigated and the alleged problem corrected if it were
found to exist (resolutions 90, 91). One resolution was
defeated by the delegates after the Chairman of the Repatria-
tion Commission had expressed doubt that the problem
referred to existed but promised to investigate and take action
if necessary. Two resolutions were withdrawn when it was
pointed out that the suggested course of action would place
returned servicemen at a disadvantage (resolutions 84, 187).

Only two matters of this type were considered at the 1962
Congress and both were immediately accepted by the Chair-
man of the Repatriation Commission (resolutions 9, 96).
Interviews with officials in the ex-service departments indicate
that the situation is quite similar to that noted by Eckstein
with reference to the British Medical Association. Both organ-
izations have close links with the government departments
in which they are interested and have a great deal of success in effecting changes at the administrative level which are of mutual benefit to pressure group, department, and clientele.

**National Affairs**

The R.S.L. has always had good relations with the government departments administering defence and immigration, and a considerable number of minor issues had to be worked out with the Immigration Department when the League was actively sponsoring migrants from Europe.

**Comment**

Even though there have been periods in the R.S.L.’s history—the World War II years are an example—when the ratio between R.S.L. demands and Commonwealth government action has fallen, there can be no question about the organization’s extraordinary record with regard to repatriation matters and creditable showing where matters of national interest have been involved. In fact, very few of the major repatriation demands of the League have not met with a satisfactory response. Pension rates tend to have lost some of their value since 1920 but this has been compensated for in part by the initiation of various types of allowance and other benefits—particularly in the case of widows.

Although Wootton’s assessment of British Legion effectiveness covered a fairly narrow scope, the League would appear to have been considerably more successful than its British counterpart. But international comparisons between the effectiveness of the League and other ex-service organizations are difficult to make. Even if the treatment of ex-servicemen in different countries is used as the basis of comparison, variations in income and living costs render pension rate assessments suspect and national health schemes complicate examination of medical treatment provisions. There are, of course, some broad comparisons which can be drawn—Turkey, for example, does not pay any compensation to disabled ex-servicemen because it regards national military service as a citizen’s privilege, not requiring compensation—but it is per-
haps more interesting to note some comparisons between countries which have, to all intents and purposes, accepted the principle that citizens should be compensated for disabilities incurred during national military service. Comparisons must, of course, be limited to countries with some degree of economic similarity.

A comparison of the benefits provided under the Australian Repatriation Act with those provided in ten other countries indicates that Australia's provisions compare more than favourably with those elsewhere. Each of the ten countries under consideration provides pensions for incapacity due to war service but only in Australia can tuberculosis be claimed as a pensionable disability without the necessity to establish a direct relationship between the illness and war service. All pay pensions in respect of wives but New Zealand has a means test and in the United States no pension is paid to a wife unless her husband's disability is assessed at more than 50 per cent. Each country pays pensions to dependent children but only Australia separates this payment from the serviceman's pension. Each of the countries pays an allowance to compensate for attendance for repatriation treatment but only Japan and Australia provide a special allowance for those who are unable to use public transport. Paraplegics and double amputees get gift cars in Australia and Britain but not in Canada and Japan. The provisions in South Africa, Belgium, France, Germany, and Italy are not known. New Zealand does provide special loans for automobile purchase. Britain, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa join Australia in providing clothing allowances, while the United States does not.

Each country provides medical treatment for all disabilities judged due to war service, but none provides automatic medical services to the group covered by Australia's service pension. Australia, South Africa, the United States, Belgium, and France provide rehabilitation training and allowances; Germany, Italy, and Japan do not; and the provisions obtaining in Britain, New Zealand, and Canada are not known.

Each pays a basic pension to war widows but only Australia, Britain, New Zealand, and Italy provide domestic
The Politics of Patriotism

allowances on behalf of children who are under-aged or
unemployable and only in Australia is a widowed mother
provided with a pension free of any means test. Only Aus­
tralia provides medical benefits for war widows and their
children and for certain widowed mothers.

In none of the ten countries is it a generally accepted
principle, as it is in Australia, to provide benefits solely in
respect of active service in wartime. Australia's service pen­
sion is unique although New Zealand, Canada, the United
States, Belgium, and France do provide some similar benefits
to a much smaller extent. Only Canada and the United States,
however, accompany Australia in providing medical care for
persons covered by service pension provisions.

Comparison of R.S.L. effectiveness with that of other
Australian pressure groups is difficult to the point of impos­
sibility. Not only is there a scarcity of material on which to
base comparisons but there must always linger the doubt as
to whether comparisons between different groups using differ­
ent methods on different issues can ever be accurate or mean­
ingful. However, such comment as has been made on this
point has been unanimous and there seems little evidence on
which to challenge even impressionistic estimations of the
comparative effectiveness of the R.S.L. and other Australian
pressure groups. Work on the Commonwealth Public Service
associations,9 other trade unions,10 and employers' organiza­
tions11 has failed to indicate any group approaching R.S.L.
effectiveness. Nor is there any indication that the groups
which are generally conceded as influential—the Chambers of
Commerce and Manufactures, the Australian Council of
Trade Unions, large firms like Broken Hill Proprietary and
Colonial Sugar Refineries, religious organizations—have had
anything like the consistent success of the R.S.L. Certainly,
even if the favourable response of the Commonwealth govern­
ment to R.S.L. requests has not always directly reflected
pressure from the League, no other Australian group has been
as consistently successful and blessed with the League's appar­
tent advantages. Donald Horne in *The Lucky Country* (p.
175) sums up the popular view by noting that:

200
Assessment of Effectiveness

The Returned Servicemen's League is one of the most skilful pressure groups. With a quarter of a million members and many other non-R.S.L. ex-servicemen... the R.S.L. speaks to any government in the language of the ballot box. It deals with a sub-committee of ex-service members of Cabinet. It is the only pressure group that has formal access to Cabinet in this way. In fact it has better regular access... than the Service chiefs.

And this image is largely confirmed in fact. As part of the Australian tradition that has made Anzac Day Australia's national day, the League is able to press repatriation matters against virtually no opposing groups (with the exception of the Treasury) and, while having the benefit of support from numerous uninvited allies, is able to stand aloof, scorning the need for formal or informal affiliation with other bodies in its efforts on behalf of returned servicemen. The R.S.L. has always been a fully and openly accepted part of the Australian political process. No other Australian pressure group has ever been as ideally situated for political activity as has the League.
Part III

Conclusions About a Pressure Group
Conclusions

The R.S.L. has, since 1916, been Australia's major ex-service-men's organization. It has been closely connected with some of the country's most important national myths and traditions, and while its repatriation activities have given it importance with regard to one aspect of Australian life, its concern with national security has guaranteed it prominence in Australian political affairs generally. In fact, examination of the R.S.L.'s pressure group activities has provided much material relevant to the study of Australian politics since World War I.

However, the League is only one pressure group and before the impact of group activity on politics can be properly examined and assessed many such groups will have to be studied and comparisons made between them. One case study never 'proves' anything but an accumulation of comparable case study material which can illustrate or limit generalizations otherwise established, or suggest new generalizations, is a prerequisite to advancement in the study of politics.

The Determinants of R.S.L. Pressure Group Politics

Examination of the R.S.L. indicates that the nature and results of the League's political activities have been influenced by a variety of factors, some of which are apparently peculiar to this pressure group, others of which are more generally connected with the Australian environment. In his study of the British Medical Association Eckstein lists four determinants of pressure group effectiveness. The three which he gives first prominence—the structure of the governmental decision-making process, the activities of government, and operative attitudes—are environmental in the sense that they also apply to other British pressure groups. The fourth class of determinant which he lists is termed group attributes.
The Politics of Patriotism

With the R.S.L., factors peculiar to the group's membership, leadership, and structure have influenced not only the organization's effectiveness but also the channels through which it has attempted to exert political pressure and the scope and intensity of its pressure group action. The relative importance of each of the three environmental variables is also, in the case of the R.S.L., somewhat different from the order suggested by Eckstein. This, however, is neither surprising nor a criticism of the basic value of the latter's scheme. R. J. Willey, in applying Eckstein's work to a study of Sohyo (the Japanese federation of labour unions) noted the same point. But it does lead to an alteration of the order in which matters are discussed. The overwhelming importance of some factors by comparison with others necessitates separate discussion of each determinant, with reference to the effect of each on form, scope, intensity, and effectiveness. This obviates repetition which would otherwise be unavoidable.

In framing conclusions about the R.S.L. according to the determinants of pressure group politics, it is not intended to imply either a theory of causal determinism or any final theoretical outline under which groups can be examined. Rather it is tentatively suggested that the motivations and actions of pressure groups can best be understood if some of the factors which influence them are considered.

Membership. Every member of the R.S.L. is a 'returned serviceman', a person who served in the Allied cause during a period of hostilities, either overseas or in an area of war-like activity within his own country. This fact, the special nature of the organization's membership, has been the most important group determinant of R.S.L. pressure group politics.

Since tactical questions are generally settled at the senior levels within any organization (a possible exception being union strike votes) one would not expect to find that the League's rank-and-file had much influence over the channels through which pressure is exerted. On occasion, such as during the anti-communist campaign of the latter 1940s, agitation at the lower levels within the R.S.L. seems to have prompted the leaders towards greater efforts at the indirect level, but such instances have been the exception rather than the rule.
Conclusions

On the other hand, there are obvious connections between the special nature of the League’s membership and the scope and intensity of the organization’s pressure group activities. Australia’s armed forces were recruited by the Commonwealth government on the basis of both specific and general promises and returned servicemen have since been concerned to ensure adherence to these promises. In addition, their desire for government action on their behalf reflects a conviction that they suffered general economic and other deprivations by comparison with civilian members of the community. S. A. Stouffer and his colleagues, in their study of *The American Soldier* (p. 585), noted considerable hostility towards groups which soldiers felt had ‘taken selfish advantage of this war’ and pressure in Australia for such benefits as employment preference, war service homes, and gratuitous payments has indicated a desire by returned servicemen to improve their lot after a period of war service. Again, in his work, Stouffer (pp. 622-3) found that:

All studies in which questions about potential membership in veterans’ organizations were asked indicated a majority expectation of joining them and also indicated as major objectives, in the minds of the men, the protection of veterans’ rights and provision of personal help.

Where national affairs are concerned the connection between the war service of R.S.L. members and the activities of their organization is less obvious but equally strong. While protection of the rights of veterans was given primary importance in their replies, Stouffer noted (pp. 623-4) a considerable amount of concern amongst his soldiers about matters of a broader nature. Since no testing of attitudes was undertaken amongst Australia’s servicemen, their basic political views must always remain the subject of speculation. However, concern with the country’s armed defence in peacetime and hostility towards groups and individuals which appear to pose a threat to Australia’s security or way of life, whether communist, fascist, republican, pacifist, millenial, or merely ‘ratbag’, seems complementary to war service. The A.I.F. was a voluntary force in both wars, a patriotic army, and
there is no reason to doubt that patriotism also motivated
the conscripts who fought with distinction in the islands to
Australia's north. Furthermore, all were subjected to the
propaganda and conditioning which has accompanied service
in the mass citizen armies of the twentieth century. These
men, who fought in 'the war to end all wars' and 'to make
the world safe for democracy', are unable to take the steps
which they as 'diggers' once did to protect Australia from
external threat. They logically turn towards enemies which
they can reach. It may be, of course, that such feelings are
not common to all returned servicemen. Unanimity would
indeed be surprising. It is suggested, however, that such
attitudes and reactions are common to many of the returned
servicemen who are motivated to join the R.S.L.

Allegations that the 'national' activities of the League are
the result of policies set by 'brass hat' leaders in defiance of
rank-and-file wishes have been made but would seem to be
inaccurate. League policy on these matters has been remark­
ably consistent since it was first established during World
War I and not only has there never been any significant
criticism of leadership action from within the organization,
or any serious attempts to set up rival organizations, but
positive evidence indicates substantial membership support on
matters related to Australian security. In a mailed question­
naire a total of 770 R.S.L. members were asked whether they
thought the League should be concerned with national
affairs. Forty-one per cent of the sample responded. Eight
per cent were opposed to League activity with regard to
defence, while 14 per cent opposed the organization's anti­
communist activity. A greater number, 22 per cent, opposed
the official R.S.L. stand on the 'White Australia' or restrictive
immigration policy. A total of 870 persons were asked to rank
in order of importance the matters with which the League is
concerned. They placed 'War Service Homes' and 'War
Pension Rates' first, then 'Defence', 'National Service Train­
ing', and 'Anti-Communism'. Other repatriation items fol­
lowed. In Queensland 'Defence' was given first place and in
South Australia it came second.8

Not only the matters with which it is interested, but also
Conclusions

the steps which it takes towards achievement of its ends, reflect the returned-from-active-service nature of the League's membership. Eckstein includes under the heading of 'scope', the degree of group 'politicization'. This is a question of some importance in the case of the League because of the organization's long-standing refusal to extend its activities beyond the non-partisan level, while justifying to its own satisfaction activity which some of its critics have termed 'party-political'.

There seems to have early arisen amongst the members of the 1st A.I.F. a feeling that their war and postwar associations should be above 'politics', by which was implied party politics, since they were equally definite about their concern with certain national political questions. Writing from 'a Fritz Dugout' in 1917 one soldier noted that:

politics are quite beneath the concern of the average Billjim. . . . He judges broadly of Politics and Politicians. . . . But though we are not concerned one iota about Party or Politics, we are concerned, to the heart, about Australia. . . . ‘Party’ and ‘Platform’ are but words to us. There should be but one end to all parties, all platforms,—Australia . . . is Australia—the big Australia—the sole thought of those in command? That is the one question we ask the politician, irrespective of party.4

The pressure group activities of the R.S.L., which combined neutrality in party politics with participation in political matters of both ex-service and 'national' importance, were the result of feelings like those expressed above. Such feelings confirmed acceptance of the League and hastened the demise of groups which had either partisan affiliations or non-partisan electoral ambitions. They made possible, during World War I, reconciliation of non-party neutrality with alignment with the Nationalist Party in the 'win-the-war' and conscription campaigns. Opposition to the activities of 'bolsheviks' and later the Australian Communist Party reflected similar feelings. Indeed, although R.S.L. policy and the programme of one or other of the major parties has often been similar, the League has never dealt directly with any party. Although it has always been a very 'political' organization, it has always maintained a genuine 'non-partisan' stand.
The Politics of Patriotism

The nature of the pool from which the League's membership has been drawn also helps to account for the intensity—the fervour and persistence—with which League pressure group activities have been carried out. The Australian members of the R.S.L. are not ordinary returned servicemen. They are the survivors of military forces which won more than their share of the laurels of war. Objectively,

the A.I.F. was peculiar in a number of ways. After 1916 it was virtually the only force engaged on either side of the war composed entirely of volunteers. Its members were paid more than any other soldiers, including the Americans. They were bigger and healthier than most others. And policy on promotion was different from that of the British Army.5

It performed with great credit in a military sense and the fact that many of its members served abroad for a very long time between 1914 and 1919 ensured that there was 'a closer-knit esprit de corps and unity of action outside battle than among most other corps'.6 Subjectively, the exploits of the 1st A.I.F. laid the foundation for traditions and a mythology which became an integral part of Australian life. Even if every Australian returned serviceman cannot objectively lay claim to the qualities and service of the legendary 'digger', he can wear his R.S.L. badge, symbol of active service and membership in what is often described by League members as 'the most exclusive organization in Australia', and proclaim his connection with the Anzac tradition.

This intensity has been reflected in the size of the League's membership for, while the organization's size has fallen considerably, on occasion it has been considerable for much of the time—and always large enough by comparison with other groups to support the League’s claim to represent not only its own members but all returned servicemen and even all ex-servicemen and their dependants. In particular, it has been high in a comparative sense on the basis of potential. The figures for the inter-war years have already been noted.7 By 1939 the R.S.L.'s membership in relation to its potential size averaged about 41 per cent, with some of the branches recording over 50 per cent. Precise figures for the postwar
Conclusions

period are not available due to a lack of census data. However, it would appear that the density of membership today is about the same as was the case in 1939—probably between 40 and 45 per cent. This is lower than the New Zealand Returned Services Association's 50 per cent but compares more than favourably with the Canadian Legion's 250,000 members and 25 per cent of potential. It is even better when compared with the British Legion's 15 per cent and the American Legion's 12 per cent.

It can also be argued that psychological factors connected with the returned service nature of the League's membership have contributed to the organization's intensity as a pressure group. R. R. Grinker and J. P. Spiegel, after their psychological examination of American servicemen who had been in combat, predicted in *Men Under Stress* (p. 451) that the soldiers would 'search . . . for a group with strong leadership to which to bind themselves. . . . Such a group would afford them the care, interest and dependent gratification which they have so missed in civilian life.' They also pointed out (pp. 451-2) that:

> Whether or not the new group is actually for the interest of the veteran would not be nearly so important as its ability to convince him that it is, by aggressive activity in fighting for matters of importance to the veteran. In this the veteran may not be seeking personal independence or real strength and maturity, so much as a security based again on the strength of a group. Again, through identifying himself with the strong group, in a repetition of the technique which was so necessary in combat, he may himself feel strong. Similarly by finding an external enemy on which to blame the weakness and unhappiness of the veteran, the group may find an acceptable object for his pent-up hostilities and aggressions, actually arising from internal sources.

Even while great care must be used when applying such predictions to Australian ex-servicemen and to men who are not combat veterans, the point is certainly worth noting, as is the indication that group intensity, in the case of returned servicemen's organizations, might be a self-reinforcing factor.
The Politics of Patriotism

That is to say, the fact that the League is the dominant ex-service body in Australia, with intense membership support, serves to increase both the size and the intensity of the organization.

The R.S.L.'s membership has had an impact on its effectiveness as a pressure group. Wootton (The Politics of Influence, p. 65) notes that in Britain only the relatively small BLESMA (British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association) 'has something approaching a front-line pride and ethos'. The R.S.L., for reasons already mentioned, has just such an ethos, with greater internal strength than is present in more broadly based ex-service groups, not to mention other voluntary associations. This strength is reflected in the fact that the leaders of the League have never been hampered by outward evidence of internal divisions on fundamental policy (except for tactical disputes at senior level). Unlike the leaders of some other groups, they have never had to expend energy convincing the members of the correctness of their policies and actions. There has never been a direct correlation between the numerical size of the League and its political success but its ability to remain the dominant ex-service organization both in terms of members and of status has enhanced its effectiveness.

The funds at the disposal of the national headquarters for the pressure group activities of the League have been directly related to the size of the membership. They have always been limited—even by comparison with other Australian groups—leading to the conclusion that, in this case at least, wealth is not a particularly important determinant of effectiveness.

Even if actual size has not been directly related to effectiveness—the League was quite successful during the 1920s, despite a considerable decline in membership—all governments have had to face the fact that the League was the most important ex-service organization and that ex-servicemen, their dependants, and other sympathetic persons, have long made up a sizeable percentage of the Australian electorate. This, combined with the lack of any indication that the League was not supported by the general public, has contri-
Conclusions

buted greatly to the organization's success as a pressure group.

Leadership. As returned servicemen, the leaders of the R.S.L. have been affected by the same experiences as have helped condition the attitudes and actions of the membership in general. In addition, however, the motivations and beliefs of the leaders, *qua* leaders, must be considered.

While the direction of League pressure and the opportunity to exert it at ministerial level reflects, as will be noted later, the structure of the Australian governmental decision-making process, and government policy, the dominance of direct methods, despite pressure towards the indirect field, indicates conscious decisions by the national leaders of the League. The initial decisions were those of Lieutenant-Colonel W. K. Bolton and in this regard neither the fact of his lengthy career as a militia officer, nor his connections with the Nationalist Party, can be ignored.

Bolton's lead was maintained by his successors, although there were temporary departures into the indirect field and there has been a considerable increase in the frequency with which indirect pressure has been employed in recent years. It seems reasonable to assume that the personal background of various leaders has had something to do with their tactical decisions, but the consistency with which former branch leaders who once advocated more aggressive employment of indirect methods have espoused direct tactics upon accession to national office indicates the importance of the fact of leadership itself.

In the first place, although objective assessment of the relative effectiveness of various tactics has never been performed within the League—indeed, such an assessment probably poses an impossible task—the organization's national leaders have assumed that success depended upon preservation of the League's status as 'official representative' of returned servicemen and that this status in turn depended upon their refraining from excessive employment of indirect methods. There are indications that they have, on occasion, been overly conservative in their estimate of the situation. For example, after the annual presentation of a 'pensions plan' to the ex-servicemen's committee of Cabinet was formalized
in the early 1950s, it became League practice to present a copy of the plan to the Minister for Repatriation (who was chairman of the committee) a week before the meeting. The minister was then given a week's grace after the meeting before copies of the plan and other publicity material were released to the press and to all parliamentarians. This practice was based on the assumption that the Minister expected a lengthy respite before having to answer press publicity and parliamentary questions based on the League demands. It was assumed that failure to provide for this period would alienate the minister and jeopardize the League's privilege of sole access to the Cabinet committee. When, however, in an attempt to improve the publicity accompanying the annual pensions submissions, an investigation was made of the procedure, it was found that the week's grace after the meeting was neither expected nor demanded by the minister. This had been a League concession based on a faulty assessment of ministerial expectations.

However, even if leadership action has not always accurately reflected government expectations, the total effect has been to reduce the incidence of indirect pressure. Similarly, while a preference for non-partisan activity has been dictated by the nature of the League's membership, political neutrality has also been a result of leadership decisions based on a fear that formal party alignment would hamper the organization's pressure group activities after a change of government.

The national leadership of the League confers upon its holders considerable personal status and privilege. Destruction of this position by violation of the status quo has never been a step which R.S.L. leaders have been willing to take—although E. Turnbull moved in this direction during the Ryan dispute in 1923.

The concern of the leaders of the League to ensure repatriation activity by the Commonwealth government, the persistence with which they have pressed the organization's demands forward, and the adherence of the R.S.L. to a non-partisan but political stand, reflects feelings of obligation or even (despite the fact that they have not all been officers) noblesse oblige. Some have, no doubt, been prompted by a
desire for personal power, but to attribute purely selfish motives to them would be both unfair and misleading. A willingness to contribute generously of their time (and frequently money) to the League has been based upon strong feelings of responsibility for less fortunate servicemen and their dependants, as well as for Australia.

R.S.L. activity would further seem to have been a substitute for partisan political (and particularly parliamentary) activity. Some R.S.L. leaders, it is true, have moved from League activity into party politics. But in general the organization has been led by men whose political outlook reflected their feelings as returned servicemen. They have been keenly interested in matters of importance to ex-servicemen and Australia, but equally anxious to avoid party entanglements. They have preferred the greater consistency of action which League activity allows. As leaders of the League they have been able to press at length for increased pensions or more defence expenditure, without regard for caucus discipline or temporary party advantage. In fact, it is interesting to note that even some of the returned servicemen who have sat in the Federal Parliament have exhibited similar feelings. Josiah Francis’s actions during the Ryan dispute and Senator E. Mattner’s stand on national service training provide examples.

Known political skill has never been a criterion on which R.S.L. leaders have been chosen, but many of them have developed and demonstrated considerable aptitude in the exertion of political pressure on the Commonwealth government. Successive national leaders have assumed that the organization’s overall success as a pressure group reflected the use of direct tactics and maintenance of the League’s position of privileged access. They have also been able to bring indirect pressure to bear when they felt that the situation warranted it. But even if their preference for direct tactics was based more on a desire not to jeopardize the League’s favoured position than on any certain knowledge of the comparative effectiveness of various types of pressure group tactics, the emphasis on the direct approach was probably the wisest one under the circumstances. Maintenance of access ensured that the League’s demands were always known, while
pressure behind the representations was supplied from other quarters.

Structure. The main impact of the League’s structure on the form of its pressure group activities has been to ensure the dominance of direct methods. Because all representations to the Commonwealth government have had to be channelled through the national headquarters, the National President and National Secretary have generally been given control over tactics. It is true, of course, that structural alterations after World War II, which came about in response to an attempt by the branch leaders to reduce the strength of centralized control over League policy and representations, had the effect, when combined with special environmental circumstances, of increasing the frequency with which indirect tactics were employed. This trend was reversed during the fifties but recent years have seen a movement back towards exertion of indirect pressure, even while basic dependence on direct methods has remained.

The provision for movement of policy within the structure of the League has doubtless had some influence over the scope and intensity of League political activities. However, such influence has probably been secondary to the impact of factors connected with the returned-from-active-service nature of the League’s membership.

Although the operation of the League’s structure could not be judged ‘efficient’ in a strict technical sense this is not, as Selznik points out in his essay on Leadership in Administration (pp. 2-3), the most important criterion on which to judge it. Rather, the fact that the structure has catered for the multi-functional operation of the League has been of great importance. The relatively smooth way in which operation of strong local and state units, concerned with social and benevolent activity, has been combined with centralized representation of demands to the Commonwealth government has enhanced the success of the League as a pressure group. Successful multi-functional operation has helped to increase the League’s membership and has ensured a fund of government and community goodwill. The League’s benevolent activities at local and branch level have enhanced its overall
Conclusions

reputation while its willingness to co-operate with the Commonwealth's repatriation agencies has put the government in its debt. The League is the body in contact with the greatest number of ex-servicemen and the various government departments dealing with repatriation are quick to acknowledge the value to them of R.S.L. co-operation. As Morton Grodzins points out in his article, 'Local Strength in the American Federal System: The Mobilization of Public-Private Influence' (Continuing Crisis in American Politics, pp. 132-51), the existence of the American Legion's very considerable private bureaucracy, the co-operation of which is indispensable to the success of federal activity on behalf of veterans, is of considerable importance with relation to the success of Legion attempts to influence federal government action.

Certain ever-changing environmental factors must have a bearing on pressure group politics. The prevailing political situation (both national and international) and the contemporary economic situation affect the form, scope, intensity, and effectiveness of pressure group action.

In the R.S.L.'s case, for example, Dyett's willingness to employ indirect pressure in an attempt to prevent war pension reductions in 1931 reflected the contemporary economic crisis. Similarly, entry into the electoral arena in 1949, through production of a pamphlet criticizing the Labor government's record on repatriation, was the result, in part, of the unique post-war economic situation.

In both of these cases, of course, the intensity of League concern and action was heightened by the special circumstances. Likewise, it was the international situation after 1932 which made defence the subject of a League crusade.

On the score of effectiveness, the contemporary situation sometimes holds the weight which can tip the scales of success for or against League representations. The R.S.L.'s inability to prevent some sort of a pension reduction in 1931 was attributable to the seriousness of the current economic crisis. On the other hand, the 1919 success in securing a gratuity, a three-man Repatriation Commission, increased pension rates, and other benefits; the 1928-9 success in representations for pension appeal tribunals; the 1950 pension review and
increases; each must be seen in the light, respectively, of Hughes's 'khaki election', the difficulties of the Bruce-Page government, and Menzies's desire to take office away from the Chifley government. Further, while to ascribe the Commonwealth government's 1964 decision to reintroduce conscription to R.S.L. pressure would be to grossly oversimplify a complex political and international decision, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that Menzies's decision to take this step just prior to a Senate election reflected, at least in part, his realization that the League's strong demands on this point reflected, or were creating, a favourable public opinion. It is also apparent that the government's decision, in 1962, to increase the amount of the war service homes advance to £3,500, was more prompted by a desire to stimulate the economy through the home construction industry (after the 1960-1 slump and the 'credit squeeze') than by immediate R.S.L. pressure.

However, while such factors have been of temporary importance, there have also been elements in the League's environment which have had long-term effects on its activities as a pressure group.

*Structure of the governmental decision-making process.*

The form of R.S.L. pressure group politics reflects in an obvious manner the structure of the governmental decision-making process in Australia. Throughout the period in which the League has been active, the Australian political system has been characterized by a concentration of decision-making power at ministerial and Cabinet levels. Parliamentary behaviour has been marked by the disciplined parties and party-line voting essential to Cabinet government. Access to the decision-making process through individual parliamentarians and their voice in caucus has existed—one more avenue than is available in Britain—but while it has been possible to bring pressure to bear indirectly through individual parliamentarians, political parties, the press, administrative officials, and the public generally, the ultimate destination of such pressure has been determined by the location of effective decision-making power in Cabinet. This has been the direction
Conclusions

of all R.S.L. representations except those to public servants on matters finally decided at the administrative level. On a few occasions—much to the dismay of the League—parliamentary committees have been given some scope for action, but such instances have been infrequent.

It has been the deliberate policy of successive governments to encourage the League to confine its representations to the direct level. In 1917, when promising them financial assistance, Senator Millen asked the leaders of the League ‘Instead of speaking through the press . . . [to] come and talk it over with me’. This invitation was thereafter reiterated by all governments, with the R.S.L. given a privileged position as de facto official representative of ex-servicemen. The Menzies government gave the organization exclusive access to a committee of Cabinet, with one minister proclaiming the League ‘the only public organisation [in Australia] with direct access to Federal Cabinet. . . . In fact, . . . the only one in the free world with this privilege’.

The R.S.L. has in fact become an integral part of the governmental decision-making process on repatriation (and, to a lesser extent, on other matters). When, during World War I, the Commonwealth government decided to make detailed provision for the treatment of returned servicemen, the League was the body which had the best claim to expertise on the subject. Millen’s request for R.S.L. cooperation indicated not only the government’s desire to avoid public criticism and controversy about its repatriation policy, but also recognition of the indispensability of League assistance to the success of the government’s programme. Since that time a tradition that repatriation should be kept ‘out of politics’ as well as the lack of strong parliamentary committees has left the non-partisan R.S.L. in a position of strength. Where normally one would expect to find power gravitating to the government bureaucracy and expert advisers, it has gone to a pressure group. Neither the Repatriation Department nor the War Service Homes Division spends much time attempting to originate new ideas. Both deal with such matters as arise during administration of the relevant legislation and regulations, but are generally able to
leave the task of initiation to the R.S.L., which, in a constant barrage of demands and suggestions, supplies new ideas for consideration and ensures examination of established practices.

As far as effectiveness is concerned, the concentration of repatriation power (as well as power over national security) in the Commonwealth has been of considerable advantage to the League. The organization has been much more favourably placed than groups which must attempt to force six state governments in the same direction.

The concentration of power in Cabinet would also seem to have contributed to R.S.L. effectiveness. While it is possible to argue that additional points of entry to the decision-making process (such as exist under the fragmented American system of government) can be of advantage to pressure groups generally, there can be no doubt that the R.S.L.—given its fortunate position in other respects—has been at an advantage in being able to concentrate its efforts on an executive which effectively dominates Parliament. Groups less fortunately situated than the League might well increase their effectiveness by indirect pressure through individual parliamentarians and caucus, and this will probably apply in the future to the R.S.L. But until recently the organization has been able to exploit the best of two worlds while concentrating on one. Not only has it gained because, as Pennock points out with regard to Great Britain, 'the all-or-none nature of party competition may make leaders extremely sensitive to the demands of pressure groups, and party discipline may be used to suppress elements in the party that would like to resist the demands of those groups' but also because its non-partisan nature and patriotic connections ensure little hostility and considerable support from rank-and-file elements within the parliamentary parties, and general public sympathy without the need for constant public solicitation.

There have been exceptions to this generally favourable situation, it is true. Returned soldier preference always provoked opposition from some elements within the Australian Labor Party, and League opinion on such matters as anti-communism, defence, and the ‘White Australia’ policy have not always received general approbation. In all such
Conclusions

cases, however, party leaders have attempted to play down hostility towards the League and the organization’s representations have profited from the fact that they were made direct to the decision-makers—the Commonwealth Cabinet—and were never subject to firm opposition from elsewhere.

Activities of government. The impact of the activities of the Commonwealth government on R.S.L. pressure group activities has been minimal by comparison with other factors. The impetus behind League movement did stem, to some extent, from the organization’s desire to further expand government activity in welfare fields which had already been entered with age and invalid pensions. But this factor was greatly overshadowed by convictions, reflecting the wartime atmosphere, that it was the government’s duty to provide, to the best of the country’s ability, both for the care of men who had suffered as a result of war service and for prosecution of the war effort. League pressure group activity has never been a ‘negative’ response in the sense that the activities of the American Medical Association are ‘negative’; that is, undertaken because of a fear that group interests are threatened by government activity. Rather it has always been ‘positive’—towards ever increasing government activity.

Attitudes. The special character of the R.S.L.’s membership—the returned-from-active-service qualification—has largely conditioned the matters with which the organization is concerned and the degree of its political activity. The League’s leadership has preserved for it the privilege of direct access at ministerial level, thereby guaranteeing it the opportunity to make known its demands. The operation of the R.S.L.’s structure has had the effect of confirming the organization’s direct approach and its ministerial access, while the structure of the governmental decision-making process has both influenced the direction of the R.S.L.’s pressure and provided it with the opportunity to act as a semi-official adviser on repatriation matters. Hence, both group and environmental factors have given the League the opportunity of stating its case at ministerial level on both repatriation and national affairs. Changing environmental circumstances have tended to give crucial weight to, or oppose, League repre-
sentations. However, it has been general public attitudes towards the League and returned servicemen which have tended to confirm the organization's position, increase the intensity of its demands, and give crucial weight to its representations.

World War I had a tremendous impact on Australia. Not only did such issues as the conscription question have important long-term effects on Australian party politics, but the war provided the basis on which an Australian nationalism crystallized. The salient features of this nationalism were in many ways similar to the feelings which had been expressed in the earlier 'bush legend'. Indeed, it was in part an extension of this earlier expression of national feeling. As Vance Palmer notes in his study, *The Legend of the Nineties* (pp. 12-13),

the various impulses, ideas, and aspirations that made up the Australian dream cannot be limited to a particular decade. They sought expression, in one form or another, during the whole period from Eureka to the first World War, helping to turn a mixed and scattered population into a people and bring them into harmony with their background.

Instead of the ideal Australian characteristics being symbolized in the 'digger' of Eureka, they were now embodied in the conduct of the 'diggers' of Gallipoli, France, Belgium, Palestine, and the battle of the Wazzir. 'Anzac' (a word protected by law) became the symbol of a tradition which saw 25 April 1915 as the birthdate of Australian nationhood, which celebrated the anniversary of that date as Australia's national day, and which held the conduct of Australia's soldiers to be emblematic of the country's most important qualities. World War II when Australia was threatened with invasion, saw the Anzac tradition reinforced by accounts of Tobruk, El Alamein, and the Kokoda Trail.

The R.S.L. has always been, of course, the main proponent and guardian of the Anzac tradition. In addition, it has been greatly affected by its own propaganda, with the intensity and direction of membership feeling reflecting in no small way the impact of public acceptance of the 'digger' myth-
Conclusions

ology. Such acceptance has also tended to confirm the League’s privileges. Also important, particularly with regard to the effectiveness of League attempts to influence the Commonwealth government, the Anzac tradition, when added to already existing attitudes towards state action, gave the League tremendous advantages as a pressure group.

It is generally true that in Australia ‘society retains its distrust of pressure groups, and allegations of pressure continue to arouse connotations of bribery and corruption’.

But the antagonism seems to be directed more towards an image and a term than towards actual groups attempting to influence government action—particularly action involving an extension of state activity. In his now classic work, *Australia* (p. 116), W. K. Hancock suggested that ‘to the Australian, the State means collective power at the service of individualistic “rights”’. More recently, Encel noted that ‘Australians have an irrepressible tendency to demand state action on a bewildering variety of matters’. Many of these demands have been formulated and made by pressure groups, and the right of groups to so represent community interests has never been seriously questioned. In any case, the R.S.L. has never had to overcome a strongly entrenched ‘voluntary principle’ such as hampered the efforts of British ex-service pressure groups during World War I. Indeed, almost eagerly, both government and public accepted the principle that the Commonwealth should compensate (and even reward) returned servicemen both for attributable disabilities and for service in general. As late as 1935 feelings were strong enough to support introduction of the service pension—a benefit which did not compensate for any specific disability but rather was awarded solely in recognition of active service in wartime.

The Anzac tradition lent weight to these feelings. All ex-servicemen’s organizations are able to draw upon a supply of public sympathy which contributes to what Wootton describes as ‘prestige’ and terms ‘the greatest single factor . . .’ in determining group effectiveness. The R.S.L., however, has been uniquely endowed, since its prestige has been connected with some of Australia’s most important myths and traditions.
The Politics of Patriotism

The recipient of a vast amount of public support, the League has seldom had to solicit assistance. The right of returned servicemen to benefits has been, in many ways, considered a sacred right.

In fact, while other groups have always been 'competing' with the R.S.L. for a share of the public purse, such competition has been indirect and has not constituted opposition to League claims. Indeed, the only real opposition would seem to have come from within the government itself, from the Treasury, and even this has been tempered by political considerations. At the same time there has been not only general community support but also assistance from a variety of smaller ex-service bodies.

On national affairs the situation has been somewhat different with the League sometimes facing very real opposition to its policies. But even here the organization has been able to draw upon the Anzac tradition of patriotism and has been well-placed and well-supported for pressure group action. Some governments have procrastinated and others have compromised, but none has been willing to risk public censure for ignoring the R.S.L.'s demands.

To recapitulate, it is apparent that R.S.L. pressure group politics have been determined by several factors of both a group and an environmental nature. These determinants have not been of equal importance. Indeed, factors connected with the League's special returned-from-active-service character and membership, and with the strength of the Anzac tradition in Australia, have been pre-eminent. For example, the League's status and the consistency with which its demands have been realized, have reflected not the extent to which the organization's leaders have been able to reward their friends and punish their enemies, but rather the degree to which they have been able to take advantage of values and interests prevailing in their environment. As Martha Derthick points out is the case with the American National Guard, the R.S.L. has been the 'beneficiary of environmental circumstances'. The measure of the ability of the leaders of the League has been their capacity to enhance an already favourable environment, and to exploit it. Their
Conclusions

maintenance of the organization’s ‘responsible’ reputation, their adherence to the ‘rules of the game’, their conservatism, their deliberate avoidance of clashes with other groups, all have been important as a means of maintaining a favoured position in a favourable environment rather than as a means of exerting pressure.

In the League’s case, ‘intrinsic attributes of power’, defined as the capacity of a group to realize its demands by serving values and interests prevailing in its environment, have been of much greater importance than ‘acquired attributes’, or a demonstrated capacity to realize demands through imposition of a group’s will on other groups. Although demonstrations of an ability to raise a public outcry have been made by the League on occasion, much of its power has rested on the assumption that it has the ability to punish its opponents. The fact that this assumption has never really been challenged has contributed greatly to the organization’s ability to get what it wants. Some significant reverses, in fact, could have disastrous effects, either defeating the League altogether or forcing it to take such steps as the active recruitment of rank-and-file and outside support, so as to demonstrate the reality of its political power.

The R.S.L.’s Political Future

Because it is an organization based on events which are receding into the past, consideration of the R.S.L.’s political future is of some importance. For nearly fifty years the League has been one of Australia’s most active and most successful pressure groups. It has occupied a privileged position of direct access to the Australian governmental decision-making process and, with its representations aided by an extremely favourable environment, has been able not only to ensure for Australian ex-servicemen treatment which appears to be more generous than is found elsewhere, but has also made considerable impact on matters affecting Australian security.

There are indications, however, that the League’s position is changing. The passage of time must inevitably pose domestic problems for the organization and at the same time as the leaders of the R.S.L. are feeling a need to employ indirect
The Politics of Patriotism

pressure on a greater scale than in the past, alterations in the League's environment are making the exertion of such pressure more difficult.

Membership is the League's most obvious problem but is not its most immediate. A decline, it is true, is inevitable unless Australia is again involved in a major conventional war. But while relative size is declining at present, absolute size is increasing steadily and it would appear as if the pool on which the organization can draw still numbers in excess of half a million. Even if there is no widening of eligibility provisions to include men who volunteered for overseas service but were kept in Australia (a matter presently under consideration) it is not likely that there will be any significant decrease in the League's membership for at least a decade. Further, some of the men currently serving in Malaysia and Vietnam have become eligible to join the R.S.L., and prolonged Australian involvement in south-east Asia could provide a small but steady stream of men to offset the increasing attrition of World War I returned servicemen.

The most immediate problems for the League's future as a pressure group are tied up with the organization's changing interests, the changing nature of repatriation demands, and alterations in the environment in which political pressure must be exerted.

In recent years the leaders of the League have come to devote an increasing amount of time to matters affecting Australian security. Such a shift in emphasis has been made possible by a decline in the burden of repatriation matters. The Australian repatriation system is well established and the formalization of League access to a committee of the Commonwealth Cabinet has reduced the amount of time which must be devoted to repatriation matters. The result of this shift in emphasis has been an increase in the League's attempts to exert pressure indirectly. Even Dyett was never satisfied with the results gained on such matters from direct tactics and the present leaders are much more willing than he was to supplement their attempts to influence Commonwealth government policy on security matters.

While there has been a relative decline in the urgency and
Conclusions

number of repatriation matters demanding the attention of the League, some items—such as the relative value of war pensions—have continued to be of importance. In addition, frustration with a seeming lack of results from direct representations has prompted the leaders of the R.S.L. to supplement their annual approach to the Commonwealth government with an attempt to gather outside support for their demands.

Together with an increase in the frequency of the organization's attempts to employ indirect tactics have come alterations in the League's environment. The success of the R.S.L.'s pressure group activities has rested in no small way on the organization's connection with the Anzac tradition. Since World War I, this tradition has been the dominant theme in Australian nationalism and its strength has contributed to the League's political power. However, the Anzac tradition has always been exclusive. Distinct divisions have been drawn in the community between returned servicemen and men without a record of active war service. The R.S.L. has helped to perpetuate and accentuate these distinctions through the exclusiveness of its own membership and through its propaganda on behalf of returned servicemen.

This exclusiveness has, of course, contributed greatly to the League's internal strength and to the intensity of its pressure group activities. But it has also held the seeds from which significant criticism of the organization could grow. Such criticism was once forestalled by the advent of World War II and the investiture into the Anzac tradition of a new generation. But another generation has grown to maturity since the end of the 1939-45 war and immigration into Australia has further reduced the proportion of the population which has had direct contact with Australia at war. Even as the League has continued to enforce the exclusiveness of the traditions with which it can claim direct contact, there has come increasing questioning of the R.S.L.'s policies, assumptions, and demands, as well as of its right to act as a repository and guardian of native virtue and tradition. Some such criticism has always existed, of course, but it has hitherto been minimal in strength and more than offset by the
fervency with which the League and the Anzac tradition have been supported. The present situation finds those who disagree with specific aspects of League policy—and particularly with its conservatism—aligned with and supported by criticism based on generational changes in the composition and attitudes of the Australian population.

Hence, at the same time as the League is moving away from its traditional dependence on direct tactics, the exertion of indirect pressure is becoming more difficult. Environmental changes mean that while the R.S.L. still has a considerable body of public support on which it can draw, the organization and its demands are no longer sacrosanct. On national affairs it meets with active opposition and open criticism, while on repatriation matters it finds itself in competition with other groups which want to share in disbursements from the public purse.

The exertion of political pressure is bound to be more difficult for the League as time passes. In fact, if they are to avoid a serious decline in the R.S.L.'s power, the organization's leaders may have to take steps which have hitherto been unnecessary. More attention may have to be paid to recruitment of rank-and-file and outside support. Demonstration of the reality of the League's political power may require different resources than have thus far been used in its pressure group activities.
Dear Comrades,

In view of the direction of Congress to the Executive to prepare and submit proposed amendments of the Constitution for the consideration of next ensuing Congress, it would seem desirable in the first place to form a correct appreciation of the situation.

The purpose of a Constitution is to give effect to a policy.

The policy of the League at present is national and shortly, to secure the welfare of returned sailors and soldiers and their dependants and the dependants of comrades who have made the supreme sacrifice.

Does the existing policy of the League as set out in the Constitution enable this to be done in the most effective manner? Recent experience demonstrates it does not.

The non-political character of the League has caused every existing political party to put forth cloaked and insidious efforts to capture the support of the League, to disrupt and divide the League, and for party purposes to destroy the League.

The non-political character of the League has caused the uprising of an agitation both within and without to form independent political associations of returned soldiers; the forces so designated are too powerful to be ignored by sane men.

How can they be effectively resisted or alternately absorbed into the League and thus secure solidarity and unity of effort in securing the objective of the League.

To resist them effectively without loss of strength to the League is in my opinion impossible. All men have deep-rooted political inclinations, every normal man has a strong native tendency to belong to some political party and if he cannot find a party he wholly approves of he will enter into some sort of liaison with the nearest thing to his ideal. At present there are two great political parties only in Australia, the liberal and the labour parties, the country has room for more and needs more, but while there are only two all men will be either liberals or labourites, and this applies to all returned soldiers.

Politics is a passion with Australians. You cannot keep men from politics and most emphatically you cannot keep any organisation
apart from politics which has objects to gain and which can only be gained by political activity.

Just such an organisation is the League. The defined objects of the League, both great and small are all dependent for their realisation on Governmental aid, co-operation and concession.

That being so, recent experience would indicate that to gain its objective this League must first cease to be a non-political organisation. If the League desires to give effect to the purpose of its creation it must do one of two things. It must hold itself up for sale to the highest bidder in the party political sphere—a most disreputable course—or it must become a political party, [an] Independent Political Party, as a matter of fact a third party, and evidence would show the interests of the men concerned demands a bold acceptance of the latter alternative.

Not* to discuss the sort of political party the League ought to become.

The great curse of this Country is the party system.

The predominant curse of the Party system is the abominable fact that the system continually compels its votaries to subordinate their conscience, their honour and the national welfare to party sectional interests. Therefore it is suggested this League should become an ideal political party. i.e. A Party which exists and aspires, not to seize the Government of the Country for sectional purposes but to promote the common welfare of the whole people by enlightened self Government and which has a particular programme or platform of its own which is perfectly consistent with the national well being and the national duty.

The League would secure this political position by becoming a non-party political organisation, having for its raison d'être, not political preferment, but the effectuation of its obligations as set out on the Constitution.

The League should give free licence to all members on matters outside the League platform, to belong to and vote for any other party, to be either liberal or labourite, but it should pledge its members to vote against other parties on all matters pertaining to the platform of the League when and as often as other parties are in conflict with the League policy.

From the foregoing it would appear to be obvious the time has arrived when the League should become a political organisation, having the power whenever possible or desirable to run candidates for its own Parliament, such candidates to be either labourites or liberal on matters outside the League platform, but sworn before all else to hold paramount, and to work for the platform of the League, and when the League does not run candidates of its own it should have the right to grant its support to candidates of any other party

* 'Not' should obviously read 'Now'.
who are prepared and pledged to support the League platform.

Such a political platform of the League need not be altered greatly from its present form save that it must include in definite clear cut shape all the soldier protecting objects of the Constitution. It should, however, have an additional plank, i.e. the abolition of the party system of Government embracing the reforms of elective ministries, preferential voting and proportional representation for the Senate; in no other direction should the League concern itself with the most current questions of party politics but leave its members free to decide such questions in accord with their individual consciences.

If the foregoing suggestions are adopted the League will afford a permanent haven for returned men of all shades of political opinion. It will create a common instrument for the use of all returned soldiers to protect their interest without imposing any party political conditions or beliefs.

It will cut the ground from under the feet of all political adventurers and agitators to form returned soldiers party political organisations, and it will make the returned soldiers a great and salutary power in the land, enable them to play a tremendous part in shaping the destinies of the country which they have done their best to protect on the battlefields of the older world.
Appendix

PROPOSED POLITICAL PLATFORM
OF THE
RETURNED SAILORS AND SOLDIERS' IMPERIAL
LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

No. 1
The Nations Duty to Returned Sailors and Soldiers.

A. To protect the interests and secure the welfare of dependants of men who have made the supreme sacrifice and of all sailors, soldiers and their dependants who may need assistance.

B. To maintain and up-hold in the civil life of the nation the principles of liberty and freedom for which they fought, suffered and sacrificed and for which so many have died.

C. To secure co-operative organisation for incapacitated men in particular in all industrial, commercial and rural activities.

D. To obtain the advantage of united action in securing A. B. & C. and to promote social intercourse among members.

No. 2
Direct Taxation for Returned Men and their dependants.

A. Abolition of public charity for services rendered by sailors and soldiers in fighting for their country.

B. Creation of a Federal Fund for all financial requirements of amelioration and repatriation.

No. 3
Land Settlement for Returned Men.

A. Resumption of land by Federal Government for returned men.

B. Acquisition of Crown Lands and preparing same by alien labour for returned men.

232
Appendix

No. 4
Official recognition of League by representation.

No. 5
Abolition of Party Government.

No. 6
Political liberty within the ambit of Democracy.

A. In administration of amelioration and repatriation.
B. In constitution of permanent repatriation boards.

A. Preferential voting.
B. Proportional representation.
C. Elective Ministries.

A. The acceptance of the principle it is a citizen's first duty to defend the country that sustains him.
B. Political freedom on all matters not set out in this platform.
### Appendix B

**FINANCIAL MEMBERSHIP, R.S.S. & A.I.L.A.: 1916-63**

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*Note:* The membership records of the League were not put into proper order until 1920, hence earlier figures are somewhat unreliable.
### Appendix C


#### NEW SOUTH WALES

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#### VICTORIA

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QUEENSLAND

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SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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237
### Appendix

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<th>State President</th>
<th>State Secretary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1923-4</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Dalziel, A. H.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-9</td>
<td>McCann, W. J.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Dollman, W.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>McCann, W. J.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Thompson, H.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933-5</td>
<td>Jacob, R. B.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Martin, H. W.</td>
<td>Dowling, J. F.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-9</td>
<td>Hosking, W. S.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-41</td>
<td>Sharland, W. D.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-6</td>
<td>Millhouse, E.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-9</td>
<td>Blackburn, A.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-4</td>
<td>Eastick, T. C.</td>
<td>Hall, F. U.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Pritchard, A. G.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-60</td>
<td>Lee, A. J.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961+</td>
<td>Eastick, T. C.</td>
<td>Hoffman, K. W.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(F. E. Reynolds acted as State Secretary from 1 January 1942 to 31 March 1944 during absence of J. F. Dowling on war service.)

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>State President</th>
<th>State Secretary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Priestly, A. H.</td>
<td>Hardwood, J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Hedges, J. S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Stanbury, W. H.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Jones, E. C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917-18</td>
<td>Mansbridge, W. O.</td>
<td>Taylor, C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Pope, H.</td>
<td>Braithwaite, V.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Fahey, J.</td>
<td>Butler, J. R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918-19</td>
<td>Lamb, C. H.</td>
<td>Sexty, R. G.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Bently, J.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919-20</td>
<td>Bolton, H. E.</td>
<td>Sadlier, C. W. K. (V.C.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Henderson, W. J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920-1</td>
<td>Parker, H. S. W.</td>
<td>Knowles, A. L.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-2</td>
<td>Bolton, H. E.</td>
<td>Taylor, T. V.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-4</td>
<td>Humphrey, H. S.</td>
<td>Butler, J. R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Freedman, D. I.</td>
<td>Penny, W. A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Benson, D. M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-33</td>
<td>Collett, H. B.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-42</td>
<td>Yeates, A.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-4</td>
<td>Edmondson, T. S.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-7</td>
<td>Anderson, J. M. W.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Chappell, J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948-50</td>
<td>Hunt, W. J.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-2</td>
<td>Sten, T.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

238
**Appendix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>State President</th>
<th>State Secretary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952-5</td>
<td>Chaney, F. C.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-7</td>
<td>Lonnie, W. S.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-9</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>Goodwin, A. E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-65</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>Webb, W.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965+</td>
<td>Pearson, P.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The W.A. Returned Servicemen’s Association affiliated with the R.S.L. during Pope’s period as President.)

**TASMANIA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>State President</th>
<th>State Secretary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Phillips, R.</td>
<td>Neilson, H.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>Foster, G.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>Forrest, F. E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Eccles-Snowden, R.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919-20</td>
<td>Young, D. P.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920-1</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>McRae, D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-3</td>
<td>Mullen, L. M.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-8</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>Cooper, A. D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>Howard, H. H.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930-4</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>Cooper, A. D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-43</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>Cotton, F. E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-4</td>
<td>Mitchell, J. A.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-50</td>
<td>Wertheimer, J. T.</td>
<td>Von Bibra, E. E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-9</td>
<td>Lucke, L. R.</td>
<td>Blackwood, A. C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959+</td>
<td>Geard, C. J.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>State President</th>
<th>State Secretary (Hon.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Jackson, A. E.</td>
<td>Rowe, R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Rowe, R.</td>
<td>Newton, N.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>Gaskin, A. J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>Cummins, H.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>Harrie, W. A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>Stephen, J. C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Jackson, A. E.</td>
<td>Dawkins, F. B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Rowe, R.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Nott, L. W.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-6</td>
<td>Jackson, A. E.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-8</td>
<td>Wood, E. M. H.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Jackson, A. E.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Day, A. J.</td>
<td>Joyce, H. K.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-2</td>
<td>D'Aracy, A.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

239
## Appendix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>State President</th>
<th>State Secretary (Hon.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1942-5</td>
<td>Crawford, W.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-6</td>
<td>Joyce, H. K.</td>
<td>Hardy, P. G.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Crawford, W.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Rowe, R.</td>
<td>Herridge, P. M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-53</td>
<td>Joyce, H. K.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954-5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bourke, O. W.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Campbell, I.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Timbs, M.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Hull, R.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Cutler, A. R. (V.C.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-61</td>
<td>Elliman, D. W.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PAPUA-NEW GUINEA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>State President</th>
<th>State Secretary (Hon.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Whittaker, G. W.</td>
<td>Peterson, J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952-4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Knight, J. V.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-65</td>
<td>Bunting, R. F.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vinning, H.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

240
Appendix D

NATIONAL OFFICERS, R.S.S. & A.I.L.A.: 1916-64

**Federal (National) President**

- W. K. Bolton 3/6/16-15/7/19
- Sir Gilbert Dyett 15/7/19-18/3/46
- Sir Eric Millhouse 18/3/46-24/2/50
- Sir George Holland 24/2/50-24/10/60
- A. J. Lee 24/10/60 +

**General (National) Secretary**

- E. C. Evans 3/6/16-28/10/17
- W. Burns (acting) 29/10/17-6/8/18 (died in office)
- W. Henderson 6/8/18-28/10/19
- A. P. K. Morris (acting) 8/4/19-7/2/20
- W. J. Henderson 7/2/20-10/3/21 (died in office)
- J. H. Donnelly (acting) 16/3/21-7/4/21
- F. E. Forrest 7/4/21-29/2/24
- E. J. Dibdin 13/3/24-23/5/29
- J. Webster 1/6/29-31/10/35
- E. V. Raymont 1/11/35-8/12/45
- J. C. Neagle 8/12/45-18/12/56
- K. V. Newman 18/12/56-1/9/61
- A. G. W. Keys 1/9/61 +

**Federal (National) Treasurer**

- S. E. Dunslow 3/6/16-31/7/21
- H. L. Quick 1/5/21-1/2/23
- L. S. Bracegirdle 1/11/23-20/3/31
- Major-General T. H. Dodds 20/3/31-29/8/41
- Air Vice-Marshal G. J. W. Mackinolty 29/8/41-24/2/51
- Air Vice-Marshal F. M. Bladin 24/2/51-10/3/54
- Lieutenant-General W. Bridgeford 10/3/54-29/10/56
- Air Vice-Marshal F. M. Bladin 29/10/56 +
# Appendix E

THE RETURNED SAILORS' SOLDIERS' AND AIRMEN'S IMPERIAL LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

GENERAL REVENUE ACCOUNT
for the year ended 31st December, 1963

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPENDITURE</th>
<th>INCOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Administration</td>
<td>Capitations from State Branches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6,280 12 0</td>
<td>1,356 5 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,875 1 1</td>
<td>5,029 13 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Maintenance</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>553 18 9</td>
<td>3,430 11 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>South Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 1 0</td>
<td>1,621 15 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>179 5 0</td>
<td>840 8 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences and Meetings</td>
<td>Tasmania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,830 16 10</td>
<td>453 2 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits and Travelling</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>718 0 7</td>
<td>60 9 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscriptions and Donations</td>
<td>Papua and New Guinea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(To British Commonwealth Ex-services League.)</td>
<td>70 9 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment and Allowances</td>
<td>Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>746 3 7</td>
<td>908 14 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132 3 9</td>
<td>2,906 8 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</td>
<td>TOTAL INCOME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£14,802 2 7</td>
<td>£16,677 15 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The year chosen as an example was typical except that a small expenditure was incurred in a move to a new national headquarters building. The bulk of the 'Conferences and Meetings' expenditure was the result of sending two delegates to the biennial conference of the British Commonwealth Ex-services League (in Canada). This expense is invariably offset by a grant from the Commonwealth government. In this case the grant was for £2,500 (see Grants).
Appendix F

R.S.L. MEMBERS' OPINIONS

(a) Policy Priorities

A total of 870 questionnaires were distributed to all of the members of the Batlow, N.S.W. (100); Mitcham, Victoria (250); Caboolture, Queensland (170); and Marion, S.A. (350) sub-branches. Replies were forthcoming from 346 (39.7%) members.

Respondents were asked to choose, from a list of nine items, the five which they considered the most important, and to give the order of priority. Computation of priority was effected by assigning each choice its reverse value (i.e. 1 = 5, 2 = 4 etc.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N.S.W.</th>
<th>Vic.</th>
<th>Q'land</th>
<th>S.A.</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>War service homes</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War pension rates</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National service training</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-communism</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldier settlement</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onus of proof</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The order of the items in the list is the same as the order in the questionnaire. The existence of a 'donkey vote' is hinted at, but the variation of items within the individual states and the high placing of defence indicates that voting directly down the line was not consistent.

(b) Involvement in National Affairs

A total of 770 members (the question was not included in the New South Wales questionnaire) were asked whether they thought the League should be concerned with defence, anti-communism, and the restrictive immigration policy. Questionnaires were returned by 310 persons (41%), of whom 299 answered the question.
### Appendix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Defence</th>
<th>Anti-communism</th>
<th>Restrictive Immigration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Australia</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>88·6</td>
<td>6·7</td>
<td>4·7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

244
Notes

PREFACE


INTRODUCTION

1 The 'Four Corners' controversy is dealt with in greater detail in G. L. Kristianson, 'The R.S.L. and "Four Corners"', *Australian Quarterly*, pp. 20-30.
5 The best available source for material on the Repatriation Department and system is A. P. Skerman and H. F. Gascoine-Roy, *Repatriation in Australia*. This book of some 350 pages was prepared by a former Registrar and a former Deputy Chairman of the Repatriation Commission and is classed as a 'departmental document' although not accepted as an 'official' history of the department. See also F. O. Chilton and W. E. E. Langford, 'The Repatriation Department', *Public Administration*, pp. 354-77.
6 The general rate pension is paid on an assessment of from 10% to 100% according to the degree of incapacity. Payment of full rate does not imply total incapacity but rather assessment on an arbitrary scale of physical disability. The special (or T.P.I.) rate is granted where an ex-serviceman (1) is, because of incapacity accepted as due to war service, totally and permanently incapacitated (that is, incapacitated for life to such an extent as to be precluded from earning other than a negligible percentage of a living wage), or (2) has been blinded as a result of war service, or (3) (under certain conditions) is suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis. The service pension is broadly the equivalent of the civilian age and invalid pensions, being payable at the same rate and subject to the same test provisions. The service pension is payable to an ex-serviceman who is suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis, or who has served in a theatre of war and is either permanently unemployable or who has attained sixty years of age.

245
8 The Report on Losses Due to Soldier Settlement prepared by Mr Justice Pike contains the best available summary of the background and conditions of soldier settlement after World War I, including considerable discussion of the question of Commonwealth responsibility for repatriation.

9 The 1914-18 gratuity was paid at the rate of 1s. 6d. per day from time of embarkation to the date of the signing of the peace on 28 June 1919. The maximum gratuity which accrued to any person under these conditions was £134. A total of £27.5 million was eventually paid to the members of the 1st A.I.F.

The provisions of the World War II scheme were somewhat more complicated. Overseas service was recognized at the rate of 2s. 6d. per day (or £3.15s. per month) with a minimum payment for twelve months. Service in Australia following the outbreak of war with Japan was rewarded by a payment of 6d. per day or 15s. per month. The terminal date of entitlement was to be the date of discharge or termination of appointment in the 'Special Forces' or a date twelve months after the cessation of hostilities, whichever was the earlier. In 1914-18, payment for all persons was calculated to the signing of the peace; however, in 1939-45 it was decided that in case of death on service, payment would be calculated to a time seven months after the notification of death. The maximum amount payable to a man with five years' overseas service was £225.

Neither scheme made any distinction as to rank. Further details on both schemes are contained in Commonwealth of Australia, Report of the Committee of Senators and Members of the House of Representatives Appointed to Consider and Report on Methods of Recognition of the Services of the Fighting Forces in the Present War, and in the report of a subsequent committee which reviewed the gratuity provisions in 1947.

PART I

Chapter 1


2 E. Scott, Australia During the War, p. 207.

3 Cited in ibid., pp. 402-3. Scott’s Appendix No. 3 gives monthly recruiting figures for the war.

4 Ibid., p. 365.

5 The term ‘federal’ was first used in the League’s constitution to refer to all positions and institutions at the Commonwealth level with the exception of the position of General Secretary. The con-
stitution was amended in 1957 to substitute 'national' in all places where 'federal' and 'general' had previously been used.

6 For instance, W. J. (later Sir William) Sowden headed the Adelaide ‘Cheer Up Our Boys’ association and this organization was responsible for the establishment of the ‘Cheer-Up Hut’ in which the first South Australian R.S.A. meetings were held. Sowden, a civilian, became the first President of the S.A. Returned Soldiers’ Association.

7 Interview, H. Neilson, Kingston Beach, Tas., 28 Oct. 1964. Sgt Neilson was invalided from Gallipoli and was the organizing secretary of the Tasmanian Returned Soldiers’ Association. See also L. Broinowski (ed.), *Tasmania’s War Record*, p. 206.

8 S. Encel, ‘The Concept of the State in Australian Politics’, *A.J.P.H.*, p. 73.

9 For example, in Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States, the major ex-service organizations have always maintained that questions affecting national security were above any party political connection. The organizations in all of these countries have been active with regard to defence and have argued that matters relating to pensions and rehabilitation should be dealt with in a non-partisan manner by politicians. In all of the countries mentioned, except Britain, concern with national security has extended to the exclusion of communists from organizational membership.

10 This body was ‘an independent political organization . . . [whose] chief aim . . . is to assist any Government that may be in power . . . to create a progressive Australia, wherein the soldier may be re-established as a self-reliant and self respecting citizen’. (Advertisement in *Herald*, Melbourne, 21 Oct. 1918.) The leader of this group, Mr M. P. Pimentel, was a member of the R.S.L. In 1918 he proposed an amalgamation of his party with the League and when this was refused, ran for the presidency of the Victorian branch. After his defeat he embarked upon a campaign to discredit the League and was expelled from R.S.L. membership. He slipped into obscurity after an unsuccessful attempt to sue the Federal President for £1,000 damages.

The R.S.L. party platform and manifesto drafted as a counter to Pimentel’s offer is quoted in Appendix A. The document provides an interesting indication of R.S.L. attitudes towards the politics of 1918.

11 The R.S.L. constitution gives details of eligibility.


13 Interview, S. E. Dunslow, M.B.E., J.P., Melbourne, 21 Aug. 1963. Mr Dunslow was the first Federal Treasurer of the R.S.L. and accompanied a deputation to Hughes on 19 Jan. 1917. He says that Hughes strongly stressed the need for the League to ‘put its house in order’. Lt-Col. Bolton’s report to the 1917 Federal Congress also noted that the Prime Minister had promised his ‘cordial support . . . subject to your Branches and Sub-Branches being properly organized and under
Notes (Chapter 1)

reasonable control'. (R.S.S.I.L.A., Federal President's Report to Congress, 1 March 1917, p. 3.)


15 R.S.S.I.L.A. (W.A.), President's Report to W.A. Branch on Federal Executive Meeting of 6-7 July, 1918.


18 Herald, Melbourne, 29 March 1919.

19 R.S.S.I.L.A., Verbatim Report 1918 Federal Congress, p. 31. Said Mr Hammond (N.S.W.), 'We have gone cap in hand to Ministers too long. It is now time that we insist that returned soldiers must have preference. . . . This League can only justify its existence by insisting that the men get what they have been fighting for.'

20 When Bolton had accepted the invitation of the National Federation to run for the Senate, the Central Council of the League had endorsed his action, saying that 'the action taken by the President re his nomination to the Senate is approved and that he has the confidence of the Council of the League'. (R.S.S.I.L.A., Minutes of Central Council Meeting, 31 May 1917.) By 1919, however, the situation had altered somewhat. Bolton defended his position by saying that 'although he had been returned by the Nationalist Party he still considered himself as a representative of the Returned Soldiers League in Parliament'. (Minutes of Central Council Meeting, 3 June 1919.) But others were not satisfied. Mr Hutton of Queensland told him at the 1919 Congress, 'The only trouble has been that you are in the unfortunate position of dealing with politics but the League should never go into politics at all. . . . ' (p. 235), and Mr Palmer of Victoria added that 'As far as Victoria is concerned we have come to the conclusion that the President's time has been too much hampered by his parliamentary and other duties, and that the League has suffered in consequence.' (p. 234, R.S.S.I.L.A., Verbatim Report 1919 Federal Congress.)

21 Interview, A. R. G. Fearby, Adelaide, 12 May 1964. Mr Fearby, who was secretary of the South Australian Branch from 1917 to 1920, says that approaches were first made to Sir John Monash, but that when he demanded unopposed selection as his condition of acceptance, Dyett was chosen.


24 A. P. Skerman and H. F. Gascoine-Roy, Repatriation in Australia,
Notes (Chapters 1-2)

p. 20. See Table IV, p. 194, for a comparison of pension rates and wages.
27 Acting General Secretary to Prime Minister, 5 Sept. 1919 (R.S.L. file 992).
29 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
31 Ibid., p. 12.
32 Until World War II the nominee on these various boards and on the Repatriation Commission was officially known as a representative of the R.S.L. Since the war, however, the designation has been altered to 'nominee of ex-service organizations'. In practice, the League's nominee is almost invariably appointed.
34 Courier, Brisbane, 22 Oct. 1919.
38 Ibid., 3 Oct. 1919, p. 23.
40 Register, Adelaide, 11 Nov. 1919.

Chapter 2

5 Appendix B contains complete R.S.L. membership lists.
6 The attitude of Teece and Hughes provoked a critical article in Smith's Weekly, Sydney, 3 Dec. 1921, entitled 'The Digger Dodgers'. Few tears were shed amongst the leaders of the R.S.L. when Hughes was ousted in 1922.

249
Notes (Chapter 2)

9 General Secretary to all branch secretaries (telegram), 9 Oct. 1922 (R.S.L. file 70B).
11 Ibid., 11 Oct. 1922, p. 3571.
12 Herald, Melbourne, 16 May 1923.
13 Ibid., 17 May 1923.
14 Evening Sun, Melbourne, 19 May 1923.
15 Ibid., 21 May 1923.
16 Age, Melbourne, 26 May 1923.
17 General Secretary to Prime Minister, 25 May 1923 (R.S.L. file 794a).
18 Sun, Melbourne, 28 May 1923.
19 Ibid., 31 May 1923.
20 Argus, Melbourne, 11 June 1923.
22 C.P.D., vol. 103, 3 July 1923, p. 552.
24 Interview, C. W. Joyce, Hobart, 30 Oct. 1964. The present secretary of the Victorian branch says that when he joined the branch's staff in 1923 it was common knowledge that the sub-branches were not forwarding their subscriptions to the branch office. He says that one of the main problems which faced him upon taking over the secretary's position in early 1925 was bringing the dissident sub-branches into the fold.
25 Federal President to all branch presidents, Federal Headquarters Circular 127/24, 10 Jan. 1924.
27 Argus, Melbourne, 6 Feb. 1924.
28 From report of deputation supplied to federal headquarters by West Australian branch (R.S.L. file 2002B).
29 Branch secretary (W.A.) to General Secretary, 21 July and 13 Aug. 1925 (ibid.).
30 Federal President to Prime Minister, 21 Sept. 1925 (ibid.).
31 Prime Minister to Federal President, 1 Oct. 1925 (ibid.).
32 Prime Minister to Hon. the Premier of Western Australia, 1 Oct. 1925, from copy sent to G. J. C. Dyett by Prime Minister (ibid.).
33 Branch secretary (W.A.) to General Secretary, 2 June 1926 (ibid.).
34 General Secretary to E. Mattocks, 13 March 1928 (R.S.L. file 3677B).
35 E. Mattocks to General Secretary, 9 March 1928 (ibid.).
Notes (Chapters 2-3)

36 General Secretary to E. Mattocks, 13 March 1928 (ibid.).
37 Interview, Mr W. J. Stagg, Sydney, 25 June 1964. Mr Stagg, who was branch secretary at this time, says that Coleman was one of their consistent supporters in Parliament. He recalls that there were a large number of returned servicemen in Coleman's electorate and claims that Coleman had given the League a great deal of support on repatriation matters because he wanted to be Minister for Repatriation. He says Coleman was very disgruntled when he was not elected to the ministry by the Labor caucus.
38 Federal President to branch president (N.S.W.), 26 April 1928 (R.S.L. file 3677B).
39 Ibid., 16 May 1928.
40 Branch secretary (N.S.W.) to Federal President, 19 May 1928 (ibid.).
41 Federal President to branch president (N.S.W.), 21 May 1928 (ibid.).
42 Ibid., 23 May 1928. It is hard to escape the conclusion that Hughes was already preparing for the part which he was to play in the 1929 fall of the Bruce-Page government—particularly in view of the good use he made during the 1928 general election of his image as 'Billy the Diggers' friend' (see Dagmar Carboch, The Fall of the Bruce-Page Government, Melbourne, F. W. Cheshire, 1958, p. 176).
44 Minister in Charge of Repatriation to Federal President, 6 July 1928 (R.S.L. file 3677B).
45 Branch secretary (N.S.W.) to Federal President, 10 Nov. 1928 (R.S.L. file 4073B).

Chapter 3
2 Minister for Markets and Transport (and in charge of War Service Homes) to Federal President (personal), 8 Nov. 1928 (R.S.L. file 4659B).
5 Listening Post, Perth, 23 May 1930.
7 Branch president (W.A.) to branch president (Q'land), 12 June 1930, from copy forwarded by the Queensland president to the federal headquarters. Copy in possession of writer.
8 H. B. Collett, 1930 Presidential Address, extracts in possession of writer.

251
Notes (Chapter 3)

9 Listening Post, Perth, 24 March 1931.
10 'The Hatchet Buried', Age, Melbourne, 17 Sept. 1938.
12 Federal President to branch presidents (telegram), 6 Sept. 1930 (R.S.L. file 5042B).
13 Federal President to branch presidents, 26 Feb. 1931 (ibid.).
15 Age, Melbourne, 29 May 1931.
17 Federal President to branch presidents (telegram), 10 June 1931 (ibid.).
19 It is interesting to note that when Scullin announced in the House, on 19 June, that the returned servicemen were forming a committee to determine the source of war pension reductions, a group of Labor back-benchers, headed by Curtin (A.L.P., Fremantle) and Keane (A.L.P., Bendigo) asked that trade unions and other similarly concerned bodies be given the same privilege. The Prime Minister refused the request (C.P.D., vol. 130, 19 June 1931, pp. 2862-3).
21 Branch president (Q'land) to Federal President, 6 July 1931 (R.S.L. file 5042B).
22 Federal President to branch president (Q'land), 13 July 1931 (ibid.).
24 Secretary, Prime Minister's Department to Federal President, 25 Sept. 1936 (R.S.L. file 8171B).
25 Deane published an article in Smith's Weekly on 17 November 1934. It was entitled 'The Toll on the Men of the A.I.F.—The Charge into the Valley of Death'. In it Deane, who was then a member of the War Pensions Entitlement Appeal Tribunal, claimed that 'The lads are dying at the average age of 45. . . . We are getting up to 2,000 deaths a year. . . . The only logical conclusion is that stress and strain of warfare have undermined the physical and nervous elasticity of the men who escaped wounds and sickness on actual service.' Several copies of the article were collected and filed by the Repatriation Department (Repatriation Department file G 1089) (6 parts).
26 Skerman and Gascoine-Roy, pp. 73-4.
27 General Secretary to all federal parliamentarians, 7 April 1933 (R.S.L. file 7072B).
Chapter 4

1 Herald, Melbourne, 22 Nov. 1940.
3 The strength of feelings within the R.S.L. on the question of prosecution of war by a national government was tested in a questionnaire distributed to 870 sub-branch members. Thirty-eight per cent of those sent questionnaires returned them. Amongst the respondents, 97% of whom answered the question relating to national governments, 42% favoured national governments in war time and a further 20% favoured them at all times, 17% had no opinion and only 20% were positively opposed to national governments.
4 Branch secretary (S.A.) to Federal President, 29 April 1941 (R.S.L. file 7073B).
5 Branch secretary (Q'land) to General Secretary, 24 Oct. 1940 (R.S.L. file 669C).
6 Hon. secretary Wingham (N.S.W.) sub-branch to branch secretary (N.S.W.) as repeated in letter from branch secretary to General Secretary, 31 March 1939 (R.S.L. file 224C).
7 Branch president (Q'land) to Federal President, 21 May 1940 (R.S.L. file 651C/1).
8 Sir Brudenell White to Sir Gilbert Dyett (personal), 28 May 1940 (ibid.).
9 Branch president (Q'land) to Federal President, 31 May 1940 (ibid.).
10 A history of the activities of the V.D.C. is given in On Guard with the Volunteer Defence Corps, Canberra, Australian War Memorial, 1944; reprinted book form, Sydney, Halstead Press, 1954; especially pp. 70-94. The force reached its maximum size of 98,000 in mid-1942.
11 Skerman and Gascoine-Roy, p. 111.
12 ‘Preference to Returned Soldiers in the Commonwealth Public Service, Report of Committee’, 7 May 1940. The report outlined some of the problems caused by the World War I preference scheme and recommended ways of avoiding the same problems after World War II.
13 Branch secretary (W.A.) to hon. secretary, Collie sub-branch, 2 Aug. 1939 (R.S.L. file 346C).
14 A. P. Skerman (Repatriation in Australia, pp. 113-14) states that a “braking” role was adopted in the national interest . . .’ by the Repatriation Department.
15 Register, Adelaide, 16 June 1921.
16 General Secretary to branch secretary (Tas.), 9 Oct. 1943 (R.S.L. file 337C).
17 Dr H. V. Evatt to Sir Gilbert Dyett (personal), 8 Oct. 1942 (R.S.L. file 337C/2a).
Notes (Chapters 4-5)

19 Branch president (W.A.) to Federal President (telegram), 5 Nov. 1942 (R.S.L. file 337C/2a).
20 Federal President to branch president (W.A.) (telegram), 5 Nov. 1942 (ibid.).
21 The draft bill drawn up in 1943 was the first attempt by the League to press a comprehensive piece of legislation on the government, rather than to attempt piecemeal implementation.
22 Federal President to Curtin, Hughes, Fadden, and Menzies, 21 Aug. 1943 (R.S.L. file 337C/2a).
23 Branch president (Q'land) to Federal President, 12 Jan. 1944 (R.S.L. file 337C/3).
24 Federal President to branch president (Q'land), 22 Jan. 1944 (ibid.).
27 Federal President to Prime Minister, 22 April 1944 (R.S.L. file 337C/2a).
28 Branch president (Vic.) to Federal President, 27 July 1944 (R.S.L. file 337C/3).
29 Sun, Melbourne, 11 May 1945.
30 Interview, Hon. J. J. Dedman, Canberra, 27 April 1964. Mr Dedman says that together with several other ministers he had strongly opposed the introduction of a preference bill. He says that he was overruled by a majority in Cabinet which felt that it would be politically inexpedient not to make some provision for returned soldier preference. The compromise was that 'we made an Act which never did mean anything'.

Chapter 5

2 J. A. Wicks (Returning Officer) to Federal President, 13 June 1947 (reproduced in ibid.).
3 Interview, D. O'Bryen, Adelaide, 13 May 1964. Mr O'Bryen, who was acting South Australian branch secretary during part of Millhouse's period as Federal President, says that although Millhouse and Chifley had had no previous connections, they became close personal friends during their respective periods in office in the late 1940s.
4 Prime Minister to General Secretary, 20 June 1948 (R.S.L. file 2613C/3).
6 Federal President's Annual Report (ibid., p. 10).
7 General Secretary to Prime Minister, 4 Aug. 1948 (R.S.L. file 2613C/3).
Notes (Chapters 5-6)

9 General Secretary to branch secretary (W.A.), 9 June 1949 (R.S.L. file 2613C/4).
10 Federal President to branch president (W.A.), 4 July 1949 (ibid.).
14 Acting Federal President to branch presidents, 3 Feb. 1950 (R.S.L. file 3119C/1).
15 Branch president (Q'land) to acting Federal President, 27 April 1950 (ibid.).
16 Memo, General Secretary to Federal President, 4.15 p.m., 28 April 1950 (ibid.).
17 Branch president (W.A.) to Federal President (telegram), 28 Sept. 1950 (R.S.L. file 2613C/5).
18 General Secretary to branch president (W.A.), 4 Oct. 1950 (ibid.).

**PART II**

**Chapter 6**

1 'Community', in this case, means both locality and 'community of interest' since there are sub-branches organized on the latter basis. Some of these have an ethnic background, e.g. a Greek sub-branch; some are based on place of employment, e.g. P.M.G. sub-branch, N.S.W. Fire Brigades sub-branch; others reflect common interests of other types, e.g. Masonic sub-branch, Commercial Travellers' Association sub-branch, Ex-Imperial sub-branch.

2 In Gosford, N.S.W. (pop. 8,067), R.S.L. membership accounts for 7% of the total population. In Bairnsdale, Victoria (pop. 7,480), the comparable figure is 4.4%. In Tamworth, N.S.W. (pop. 19,002), the figure is 4.5%. In Taree, N.S.W. (pop. 10,664), it is 4.7%. In Armidale, N.S.W. (pop. 13,735), the figure is 2%. In Bendigo, Victoria (pop. 40,327), it is 1.7%. (All figures are for 1963.)

3 Appendix B contains comprehensive membership figures for all branches.

4 Appendix C contains full lists of branch presidents and secretaries from the League's inception.

5 The 1964 Congress was opened by the Governor of Tasmania, Sir Charles Gairdner. Present as official guests were Gen. Sir Richard
Notes (Chapter 6)

Gale (Deputy Grand President of the B.C.E.L.), Hon. R. W. C. Swartz (Minister for Repatriation), Hon. A. J. Forbes (Minister for the Army), Hon. F. C. Chaney (Minister for the Navy), Senator J. O'Byrne, F. E. Stewart, M.P., L. H. Barnard, M.P., Hon. M. C. Everett (representing Premier of Tasmania), W. A. Bethune, M.L.A. (Leader of Tasmanian Opposition), Alderman Mabel Miller (Deputy Lord Mayor of Hobart), Brig. F. O. Chilton (Chairman of Repatriation Commission), Maj.-Gen. R. R. Gordon (Secretary-General, Services Canteens Trust Fund), T. T. Colquhoun (Director, War Service Land Settlement), K. D. A. Medbury (Director, War Service Homes), C. H. Costello (Ex-Servicemen's nominee, Repatriation Commission), Sir Valston Hancock (Chief of the Air Staff).

6 Although there is no national constitutional provision ensuring the branch presidents a seat at Congress, the constitutions of some of the branches so stipulate.

7 In 1964, three branch presidents sat on the repatriation sub-committee: Yeo (N.S.W.), Hall (Vic.), and Elliman (A.C.T.). The defence sub-committee was composed of Hall (Vic.), Eastick (S.A.), Geard (Tas.), and the National Treasurer, Bladin. Lonnie (W.A.), who recently resigned his branch presidency, was chairman of the defence sub-committee. Huish (Q'land) and the National Treasurer both sat on the finance and special (anti-communism) sub-committees.

8 Although this has always been a constitutional provision, the move to Canberra was not made until 1956. Sir Gilbert Dyett argued in the 1930s and 1940s that the League should stay in Melbourne until Repatriation moved its headquarters from that city. He was also personally unwilling to leave Melbourne and there were problems of accommodation to be faced in the capital.

9 The original formal agreement was embodied in a series of letters written by the General Secretary to the Prime Minister and other political and departmental leaders on 8 April 1919. Replies in the affirmative were received on 10 April and 11 April (R.S.L. file 185). A more recent confirmation is contained in Acting Secretary, Prime Minister's Department to branch secretary (N.S.W.), 10 Dec. 1959. 'It is the policy of the Commonwealth to deal direct with the National Headquarters... on matters which concern the Commonwealth' (from copy sent by government to National Secretary).

10 The British Legion's practice of selecting a president of senior rank and distinguished military record has never been followed by the League. Whereas the Legion's five presidents have included one field-marshall, two general officers, and an admiral of the fleet, none of the League's federal presidents has ever attained general rank. The five presidents have included two lieutenant-colonels, two lieutenants (one of whom became a captain on home service), and one non-commissioned officer. None had been career servicemen. Amongst the branch presidents the numbers have been fairly evenly

256
Notes (Chapters 6-8)

divided between non-commissioned persons and persons of field rank. There have been no men of full general rank although the present Executive includes four ex-officers, two of whom were brigadiers, and four men of non-commissioned status. The salient point seems to be that rank *per se* has played little part in the selection of R.S.L. officials. (See G. Wootton, *The Politics of Influence*, pp. 72-3.)

Chapter 7
2 The 1963 National Congress was chosen because it was one at which the writer was present at all proceedings. Attendance at the 1962 and 1964 meetings and examination of the minutes of earlier meetings, attests to the typical nature of the example chosen.
3 Every branch of the League provides facilities to aid returned servicemen in securing repatriation benefits from the Commonwealth government. This means that there is a pool of permanent officials within the League who are professionally expert at interpretation of the legislation pertaining to returned service benefits. (One of these experts, Mr W. Newington, senior War Compensation Officer of the N.S.W. branch, was present and acted as an adviser during the drafting of the 1964 pensions plan.)

In addition, of course, there are a large number of R.S.L. members who have been involved in interpretation of repatriation legislation on a voluntary basis for many years.

Chapter 8
1 Federal President to branch president (N.S.W.), 16 May 1928 (R.S.L. file 3677B).
2 Federal President to branch secretary (Vic.), 13 May 1932 (R.S.L. file 6066B).
4 Federal President to Prime Minister, 21 Sept. 1925 (R.S.L. file 2002B). See also Chapter 2.
5 Acting National President to Prime Minister, 9 Sept. 1963 (R.S.L. file 4922C). Acting National President to Postmaster-General, 13 Sept. 1963 (ibid.).
6 Federal President to Prime Minister (telegram), 11 Aug. 1932 (R.S.L. file 5491B).
8 In 1964, the national headquarters addressed 467 letters to the Commonwealth departments and ministers with which it is concerned. Of these, 117 embodied one or more direct requests for action while most of the remainder sought information, prompted the government to action on one of the primary requests, or made inquiries about a specific repatriation case. Most of the letters were directed
to a Commonwealth minister or to the permanent head of a Commonwealth department.


10 The President and Secretary, accompanied by at least one other member, but usually the full Executive, took deputations to the following ministers.

- Acting Prime Minister Watt, 5 June 1918.
- Acting Minister for the Navy, Mr Poynton, 4 Aug. 1919.
- Prime Minister W. M. Hughes, and W. Massy Greene, 11 Sept. 1919.
- Prime Minister W. M. Hughes, 3 Oct. 1919.
- Prime Minister W. M. Hughes, and W. Massy Greene, 9 Oct. 1919.
- Prime Minister W. M. Hughes, 16 Oct. 1919.
- Acting Minister for Defence, Senator Russell, 29 Nov. 1919.
- Prime Minister W. M. Hughes, 1 Nov. 1919.
- Minister for Repatriation, Senator Millen, 8 March 1920.
- Minister for Defence, Senator Pearce, 9 June 1920.

11 The Rural Reconstruction Commission of four men was appointed by the Curtin government under the National Security Regulations. It was directed to investigate the organization of the rural economy for war and defence purposes and ‘the re-organization and rehabilitation of the Australian rural economy during the post-war period’. Its second report, dated 18 Jan. 1944, dealt with ‘Settlement and Employment of Returned Men on the Land’. (Commonwealth of Australia, *Rural Reconstruction Commission*, 1944-6, Reports 1-10.)

12 National Secretary to branch secretary (N.S.W.), 14 May 1959 (R.S.L. file 4666C).

13 Federal President to branch secretary (Vic.), 17 July 1924 (R.S.L. file 1848B). ‘I interviewed the Prime Minister yesterday . . .’

14 Federal President to Prime Minister, 22 Aug. 1928 (R.S.L. file 3985B).

15 *C.P.D.*, vol. 124, 7 May 1930, p. 1479.


17 The increased prime ministerial work load was attested to recently by Sir Robert Menzies. In an address to the National Press Luncheon Club on 14 September 1964, he noted that: ‘the complexity and mass of matters coming across my table today is double or treble what it was . . . twenty-five years ago.’ (Reprinted in *Prospect*, Melbourne, No. 3 (1964), p. 17.)

Notes (Chapters 8-9)

19 General Secretary to branch secretary (Tas.), 28 Sept. 1921 (R.S.L. file 187B).
20 General Secretary to branch secretary (S.A.), 8 Dec. 1925 (R.S.L. file 2282B).
21 Ibid.
22 Results of the interview were outlined in Federal Headquarters Circular 78/32, 9 May 1932.
23 Details of the negotiations are contained in R.S.L. file 5416B.

Chapter 9

2 Federal President to branch president (W.A.), 4 July 1949 (R.S.L. file 2613G/4).
3 An examination of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Handbook indicates that at least 225 returned servicemen sat in the Commonwealth Parliament between 1920 and 1962. Forty-two per cent (166) of the 394 persons elected to the House of Representatives saw overseas service. Out of 167 Liberals (U.A.P., Nationalists) 99 saw war service. The comparable figure for the Country Party was 25 out of 56, while 39 out of 167 representatives of the Australian Labor Party were returned men. Three returned servicemen sat as independents or were affiliated with a minor party.
   Just over 28 per cent (59) of 208 senators were returned servicemen. Of these, 34 were Liberals (out of 104), 4 belonged to the Country Party (out of 17), 20 were members of the A.L.P. (out of 85), and of two senators otherwise affiliated, one was a returned man. A total of 109 persons are known positively to have been members of the R.S.L. because they wore a League badge for their official photographs. A more accurate figure cannot be ascertained.
4 Federal President to branch president (N.S.W.), 26 April 1928 (R.S.L. file 3577B).
7 V. O. Key, Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups, p. 128. ‘Its [the American Legion’s] Washington lobby is one of the most able. It maintains complete records of the positions taken by each Congressman on matters of interest to the Legion.’
10 J. D. Stewart, British Pressure Groups, Appendix B, p. 250. See also a discussion of the role played in Parliament by Sir Ian Fraser,
Notes (Chapter 9)


12 D. C. Cameron to General Secretary, 17 Feb. 1926 (R.S.L. file 5329B).
15 Ibid., 29 Sept. 1920, p. 5112.
16 Details in R.S.L. file 5329B.
17 Details in R.S.L. files 5564B and 6066B.
19 Ibid., vol. 91, 31 March 1920, p. 1061 contains a profession by Maloney of his personal friendship with, and high regard for, Dyett.
20 Ibid., vol. 120, 21 March 1929, p. 1625. Coleman tells how he first introduced the suggestion at a meeting of the Homebush sub-branch and how it later went to state and national congresses.
21 Ibid., vol. 117, 24 Nov. 1927, p. 1876.
26 Ibid., vol. 183, 28 June 1945, p. 3781.
30 General Secretary to branch secretary (Vic.), 18 Sept. 1925 (R.S.L. file 2295B).
32 Acting Federal President to branch president (W.A.), 27 Jan. 1950 (R.S.L. file 3119C/1).
33 Interview, M. Harrison (Federal President, Australian Legion of Ex-servicemen and Women), Canberra, 24 April 1965.
34 Correspondence contained in R.S.L. file 3767B.
35 W. C. Cambridge to General Secretary, 5 Sept. 1934; General Secretary to W. C. Cambridge, 9 Oct. 1934 (R.S.L. file 7045B).
(When the matter had first been raised the secretary of the N.S.W. branch, R. D. Hadfield, had described the Association as 'a very friendly one' and had said that Cambridge had 'been a real good
Notes (Chapters 9-10)

friend to the League'. Branch secretary (N.S.W.) to General Secretary, 4 Oct. 1934 (R.S.L. file 7045B).
38 Correspondence in R.S.L. file 4830C.
39 The average circulation figure, per issue, during 1964 was as follows: Reveille (N.S.W.) 27,000; Mufti (Vic.) 6,000; Listening Post (W.A.) 15,575; Vigilance (Q'land) 6,000.
41 V. O. Key, Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups, p. 128.
42 Appendix E contains a statement of the National Executive's General Revenue Account for 1963.

Chapter 10
1 Reveille, Sydney, vol. 34, January 1961, p. 3.
2 S. E. Finer, record of discussion at seventh session, International Political Science Association, in H. Ehrmann, Interest Groups on Four Continents, pp. 294-5.
4 Figures compiled from Commonwealth Public Service Board (Commission) annual reports, 1919-41 and confirmed by reference to the report of the 1940 committee on 'Preference to Returned Soldiers in the Commonwealth Public Service', Canberra, 7 May 1940.
5 Recruitment and Research Branch, The Sample Survey of Third Division of the Commonwealth Public Service—31st July, 1956, p. 5. Mention of the effect which preference had on the C.P.S. was contained in both the 1940 committee report and in the report of the Boyer Committee (see Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Public Service Recruitment, 1958).
6 Interview, Brig. F. O. Chilton (Chairman, Repatriation Commission), Melbourne, 25 May 1964.
7 Interview, K. D. A. Medbury (Commonwealth Director of War Service Homes), Canberra, 10 Nov. 1964.
8 The countries are Britain, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, U.S.A., Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan. The comparison is based on a survey prepared by officers of the Repatriation Department and embodied in Minute Paper G71/1/51, Minister for Repatriation.
PART III

Chapter 11

1 R. J. Willey, 'Pressure Group Politics: The Case of Sohyo', *Western Political Quarterly*, pp. 703-23. The question of the comparative study of pressure groups is also considered by Gabriel Almond in his report on the American Social Science Research Council's Committee on Comparative Politics (*A.P.S.R.*, pp. 270-82). Reference should also be made to the work of Joseph La Polombara ('The Utility and Limitations of Interest Group Theory in Non-American Field Situations', *Journal of Politics*, pp. 29-49). Also of interest are the writings of Jean Meynaud and H. Ehrmann. Myron Weiner's *The Politics of Scarcity* provides an application of pressure group research to the Indian situation.

2 An example of such agitation was provided by a case in Wonthaggi, Victoria, where R.S.L. members packed a communist meeting, shouted down the speakers, and forced one of them to hand over his R.S.L. badge to the local sub-branch secretary (*Sun*, Melbourne, 10 Nov. 1948).

3 See Appendix F for detailed material from the questionnaire.

4 S. W. Hodge, 'Billjim and Politics', *The Yandoo*, vol. 3 (1 Sept. 1917, 'Printed in a Fritz Dugout'). Reprinted in S. E. Rohu, E. Harding, B. C. Duckworth, and S. W. Hodge, *The 7th Field Artillery Brigade Yandoo*, Sydney, The Yandoo Management, 1919, p. 70. (*The Yandoo* was a unit paper published during the period of the brigade's mobilization.)


6 M. H. Ellis, *The Torch*, p. 3.

7 See Table III, p. 116.

8 By the end of World War II, 557,799 persons were eligible for Returned from Active Service Badges (the basic qualification for R.S.L. membership). Deaths on active service reduced the number of potential members to 529,561 (Gavin Long, *The Final Campaigns*, Appendix 7). If one assumes that since 1946 deaths have been balanced by immigration to Australia of persons eligible for R.S.L. membership then a rough figure of 530,000 can be struck. In addition, it is estimated that as a maximum 100,000 World War I veterans are still alive. The R.S.L.'s present membership is just over 40 per cent of the total figure and this pool of 630,000 is probably an overestimate.
Notes (Chapter 11)

12 Interview, Warren H. MacDonald (Director of Research, the American Legion), Canberra, 20 May 1965.
13 The difference is akin to that noted by A. W. Gouldner (*Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy*) between groups of gypsum miners who shared common dangers underground and groups of men who worked in gypsum mills on the surface.
14 The problems faced in some pressure groups are outlined in G. E. Caiden, ‘The Commonwealth Public Service Associations as a Pressure Group’, *A.J.P.H.*, p. 311.
16 The statement was made by Hon. R. W. C. Swartz, then Repatriation Minister, during an address to an R.S.L. banquet (*Queensland Times*, Ipswich, 4 March 1963).
19 S. Encel, ‘The Concept of the State in Australian Politics’, *A.J.P.H.*, p. 64.
21 Ibid., p. 254.
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RETURNED SERVICEMEN'S LEAGUE

National Headquarters Files. A complete set of files was available. Dating from mid-1917, the files contained correspondence to and from the Commonwealth government, and between the branches and the national headquarters. Most also contained other material relevant to attempts to influence Commonwealth government policy. Such things as supporting letters from outside the League, publicity material, and newspaper and parliamentary comment were to be found with the basic correspondence in many of the files. A large number of files were examined, and direct citations have been made in the footnotes.

Branch Files. Branch correspondence files were consulted where such was necessary for examination of the League's pressure group activities with reference to the Commonwealth government.

Minutes of National Congress. Bound minute books covered the full period from the League's inception in 1916.

Minutes of National Executive. Bound minute books contained a record of all meetings of the National Executive and its predecessor, the Central Council.

Minutes of Branch Annual Meetings, Council Meetings, Executive Meetings, and Committee Meetings. All of the branches had complete bound sets of relevant minute books.

Annual Reports of the National Executive. A set of printed annual reports was complete from 1920. Until 1952 these reports contained a balance sheet of League income and expenditure at the national level. After this date the balance sheet was published separately.

Branch Annual Reports. Except in the case of Queensland every branch had complete sets of annual reports. Queensland's set was complete only from 1945. The annual reports usually combined material about the branch's benevolent and political activity with a financial statement.

Sub-branch Annual Reports. Sample reports were collected from a number of sub-branches.

National Headquarters Circulars. The circular letters sent by the national headquarters to the branches are bound and indexed each year. A complete set was available from 1916.

Verbatim Reports. Until 1922 verbatim reports were taken of all Congress and most Executive and Council meetings. Similar records were also made of discussion at League deputations to members of the Commonwealth government.
Bibliography

National Constitution, Rules, and By-laws. Printed and manuscript copies of the League’s national constitution were collected from a variety of League sources. These covered constitutional changes during the full period under consideration.

Branch Constitutions and Sub-branch Handbooks. Current constitutions were obtained from each branch, as were copies of the handbooks issued for the guidance of sub-branch officials.

R.S.L. Journals. The official journals which have from time to time been published were available either from the branch headquarters or from the library of the Australian War Memorial. The following is a list of those consulted.

Back, Adelaide (S.A. Branch, became Sentry-Go in 1956 and ceased publication in 1961).  
Civvy, Caulfield (Caulfield Central Sub-branch).  
Cronulla Advance, Cronulla (Cronulla Sub-branch and R.S.L. Club).  
Duckboard, Melbourne (Melbourne Branch (Sub-branch)).  
Listening Post, Perth (W.A. Branch).  
Maitland Digger, Maitland (Maitland Sub-branch).  
Mitcham Sentinel, Mitcham (Mitcham Sub-branch).  
Mufti, Melbourne (Victorian Branch).  
On Service, Hobart (Tasmanian Branch, ceased publication).  
Queensland Digger, Brisbane (Queensland Branch, became Vigilance in 1961).  
Reveille, Clayton (Clayton Sub-branch).  
Reveille, Sydney (N.S.W. Branch).  
Serviceman, Canberra (West Canberra Sub-branch).  
Stand-To, Canberra (A.C.T. Branch).  
Trumpet Call, Paddington (Paddington-Woollahra Sub-branch).

Interviews. Various aspects of League activity were discussed with innumerable members. In addition to those mentioned in the preface, the following list (three national officials, the rest branch officials) selects for mention persons with whom extended conversations were held.

S. E. Dunslow  
J. C. Neagle  
R. Angel (Q’land)  
A. Baker (N.S.W.)  
B. J. Bourke (A.C.T.)  
R. G. Bowen (Vic.)  
A. M. Carlisle (Q’land)  
A. R. G. Fearby (S.A.)  
C. P. Fewster (S.A.)  
F. U. Hall (S.A.)  
R. Hicks (Vic.)  
G. L. Hieronymous (Q’land)  
M. B. Hoare (Q’land)  
H. Holder (W.A.)  
G. M. Jones (Q’land)  
R. A. N. Kelly (A.C.T.)  
A. W. Laing (N.S.W.)  
J. R. Lewis (N.S.W.)  
K. A. Lowe (Q’land)  
F. S. Maher (N.S.W.)
Bibliography

A. D. Malcolm (N.S.W.)
H. Neilson (Tas.)
R. Nock (S.A.)
D. O'Bryen (S.A.)
N. S. Osborne (Vic.)
R. G. Piggott (Tas.)
F. E. Reynolds (S.A.)
L. A. Robb (N.S.W.)
R. Rowe (A.C.T.)
J. Sanderson (N.S.W.)
J. A. Sherriff (Q'land)
W. J. Stagg (N.S.W.)
E. C. Townshend (W.A.)
P. Venn (Vic.)
R. E. Weeks (N.S.W.)
T. K. White (Q'land)
N. D. Wilson (Vic.)

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———, We Asked the Commonwealth Government and Now We Ask You. Melbourne, Argus and Australasian, 1949.


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——, From 'Digger' to 'Digger'. Brisbane, 1938.
R.S.S. & A.I.L.A., S.A. Branch, As An Ex-member of the Forces Do You Know How Vitally the Following Affects your Former Comrades, the Widows, the Orphans, and YOURSELF. Adelaide, 1928.
——, Protection for Women and Children... Adelaide, Graphic Services, 1962.
——, The Story of the Badge We Wear. Adelaide, Graphic Services, 1962.
——, This is the R.S.L. Adelaide, Printers’ Associates, 1962.

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full period in which war service homes have been provided for Australian returned servicemen.

Minute Paper G 71/1/51, Minister for Repatriation. This document, which contains a lengthy and detailed comparison between Australian repatriation benefits and those in other countries, was made available by Hon. R. W. C. Swartz.

The Civil Re-Establishment of the A.I.F.—A Summary of the Work of the Department of Repatriation from April, 1918, to the End of June, 1920, With Some Account of the Activities Which Preceded the Department’s Formation. Melbourne, Repatriation Department, 1920.


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268
Bibliography

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272
Bibliography


Bibliography


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Bibliography

MANUSCRIPTS


Index

American Legion, 184, 211, 217
American Medical Association, 221
American National Guard, 224
American pressure groups, see Pressure groups
Anti-communism, 13, 101, 181, 208, 243, 244; ex-service organizations, 247; League’s influence, 191, 192, 220; public campaign, 97, 104, 184, 206; publication of booklet, 103, 182; referendum (1951), 102, 136; World War II (after), 86, 102, 103, (during) 71
Anzac tradition, 201, 222, 223, 227
Appeals tribunals, xxv, 147; campaign, 42-8, 160, 189, 217
Australian, xx-xxi
Australian Broadcasting Commission (‘Four Corners’), xx, 152
Australian Capital Territory branch, xxi, 59, 162; journal, 181; membership, 117, (referendum) 87, 88; officers, 239, 240
Australian Imperial Forces, 210; Korea, xxiv, x xv; Malaysia, xxiv, xxv, 226; veterans' reserve, 71-2; Vietnam, 226; voluntary force, 207, 210; World War I, xx, 3-5, 13; World War II, xxiv, xxv, 73
Australian Labor Party: conscription, 3, 4, 6; preference in employment, 52-7, 79, 220; relations with League, 49, 70, 220
Australian Legion of Ex-service men and Women, 179, 180
Australian Natives’ Association, 14
Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Act (1917), xxiv; see also Repatriation Act
Barnard, H. C., 90, 92, 156
Barnes, Senator, 53
Bladin, Air Vice-Marshal F. M., 126, 256
Blamey, Sir Thomas, 128
Blinded Soldiers’ Association, 179, 181
Blundell, R. P., 29, 173, 174
Bolshevism, see Anti-communism
Bolton, H., 40
Bolton, K., 94
Bolton, Lieutenant-Colonel W. K., 7, 14, 124, 176, 213, 241; relationship with W. M. Hughes, 7, 154, 157; preference for direct tactics, 13, 14, 146, 213
Brand, Senator C. H., 59, 81, 82, 173
British Empire Exhibition Commission, 30-5
British Empire Services League (British Commonwealth Ex-services League), 30, 36, 58, 124
British Legion, 176, 187, 198, 211, 256
British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association, 212
British Medical Association, 187, 197, 205
Bruce, S. M.: and League, 28, 32-5, 157, 158, 161; soldier settlement (W.A.), 40, 150, 152
Index

Burchell, R. J., 173
Burns, W., 11
Butler, C. P., 34
Buttfield, Senator Nancy, 172

Cambridge, W. C., 180
Cameron, Sir Donald C., 43, 52, 164, 173, 175
Canadian Legion, 211
Central Council of Women’s Auxiliaries, xxii
Chaney, Hon. F. C., 164, 238
Chauvel, Sir Harry, 72, 74
Chifley, J. B., 89, 93-6, 156, 158
Coleman, P. E., 44, 175
Collett, Senator H. B., 57, 59, 76, 164, 175, 176
Commonwealth Council of Disabled Soldiers’ Associations, 94, 100, 179
Commonwealth Public Service, ex-servicemen’s preference: demand for, 15, (effectiveness) 17; effect on, 195-6; examinations, 29, 78; permanent appointment, 66; R.S.L. effectiveness, 45, 189, 190, 191
Communism, see Anti-communism
Conscription, 3, 4, 7, 71; see also National service
Coombs, H. C., 155
Cooper, Sir Walter, 99, 164
Culley, C. E., 173
Curtin, J., 79-83, 252

Daily Telegraph (Sydney), 91
Danby, Major L. J., 71
Deane, P. E., 67
Dedman, Hon. J. J., 155, 164, 254
Defence, 102, 180; concern of League, xxviii, 67, 68, 157, 208, 243, 244; League’s influence and policy, 191, 196, 220; public campaign, 104, 183, 184; sub-committee on, 101; veterans’ Defense—cont. reserve, 71; Volunteer Defence Corps, 73, 74, 192, 253
Defend Australia League, 180
Depression, 66, 68, 189, 190
Dibdin, E. J., 39, 42, 44, 161, 237, 241

Disability organizations: Blinded Soldiers’ Association, 179, 181; Commonwealth Council, 94, 100, 179; growth, 23; League co-operation with, 179; Limbless Soldiers’ Association, 63, 179, 181; Partially Blinded Soldiers’ Association, 61, 63, 179; pensions reduction, 63; Royal Commission on disability assessment (1942), 38, 157, 159; Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Soldiers’ Association, 179; Tubercular Soldiers’ Association, 63, 181

Dyett, Sir Gilbert, 14, 36-8, 44, 57-9, 69, 83, 88, 124, 127, 162, 169, 241, 256; appeals tribunals, 42-8, 160; criticism and opposition, 29-31, 36, 48, 49, 59, 69, 98, 99; relations with parliamentarians, 22, 38, 49, 51, 89, 158, 168, 169, 174; Repatriation Commission, 18, 19; soldier settlement in W.A., 40, 41, 150; tactics (direct), 26, 28, 68, 147, 155, 157, 226, (indirect) 60, 66, 84; Volunteer Defence Corps, 73, 74; welfare, 20-2, 38, 54-5, 77, 82, 157, 159, 160, (pensions reductions) 60-6, 152, 158, 217

Evening Sun (Melbourne), 32, 33
Ex-servicemen’s committee of cabinet, 100, 156, 219
Ex-Servicemen’s Organizations’ Liaison Committee, 95

Fadden, A. W., 81, 163

280
Index

Farmers and Settlers' Association, 180
Fearby, A. R. G., 248
Foll, Hon. H. S., 164, 174
Forde, Rt Hon. F. M., 83, 155
Forrest, F. E., 29, 31, 39, 78, 161, 239, 241
Francis, Josiah, 44, 66, 164, 175, 215

Giblin, L. F., 64, 65
Glasgow, Senator Thomas, 35, 52, 173
Gratuities, xxvii, 75, 77; League's influence, 189, 217; public campaign, 20-2
Green, R. F. H., 175
Gullett, Sir Henry, 34, 164, 179

Hasluck, Rt Hon. Paul M. C., 78
Herald (Melbourne), 33, 34, 55
Holland, Sir George, 98, 102, 104, 124, 179, 237, 241; relations with Dyett, 60, 98, 99; representations to Parliament, 99, 104, 147, 156, 158, 163, 189; welfare, 53, 55, 92, 100, 189
Howse, Sir Neville, 44, 46, 47, 160
Hughes, W. M., 4, 81, 218; appeals tribunals, 45, 46; and League Executive, 7, 10, 17, 22, 28, 154, 157; and welfare, 18, 19, 20-2, 67, 155
Huish, Sir Raymond, 65, 82, 139, 156, 163, 237; Volunteer Defence Corps, 73, 74

Immigration, 68, 227; League's influence, 191, 192, 196; League's policy, xxviii, 9, 67-8, 104; views of members, 208, 243, 244; White Australia policy, 68, 208, 220
Indonesia, 139-40

Institute of Architects of N.S.W., 180
Inter-Departmental Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, 75-6
Japan, 71, 199, 206
Jehovah's Witnesses, 71, 136, 192
Joyce, C. W., 38, 53, 55, 64, 96, 237

Keane, Senator, 176, 267
Keys, A. G. W., 102, 125, 126, 139, 241; public campaigns, 104; relations with parliamentarians, 168, 174

Labor Party, see Australian Labor Party
Lee, A. J., 102, 104, 124, 238, 241
Limbless Soldiers' Association, 63, 179, 181
Lucas, S., 177
Lucke, M., 101, 239
Lyons, J. A., 66, 152, 158, 159, 161

McCann, F. J., 59
Malaysia, xxiv, xxv, 226
Maloney, P. J., 51, 160
Maloney, W., 174
Mannix, Archbishop, 5
Marr, Sir Charles, 161, 164, 173, 174
Master Builders' Association of N.S.W., 180
Matten, Senator E. W., 175, 176, 215
Menzies, Sir Robert, 75, 76, 81, 83, 163, 218; ex-servicemen's committee, 100, 156, 219; pensions, 96, 152; relations with Holland, 99, 158
Mercury (Hobart), 96
Millen, Senator, 12, 18, 219
Millhouse, Sir Eric, 88, 97, 124,
Millhouse, Sir Eric—cont.
238, 241; direct representations, 97, 147; indirect pressure, 104; relations with parliamentarians, 156, 158, 167, 168
Monash, Sir John, 36, 37, 58, 59, 128

Nasution, General A. H., 139
National Council of Women, 14
National Executive of the R.S.L., 111, 122, 123; and branch presidents, 97, 127; and Cabinet committee, 100; considerations and policy determinations, 138, 139, 144; participation, 102, 104; pensions, 63; sub-committees, 101
National President of the R.S.L., 124, 125; access to Prime Minister and ministers, 157-60; election of, 110, 127; office-holders, 241
National Secretary of the R.S.L., 125, 126; appointment, 110; office-holders, 241; responsibilities, 161, 165; representations to ministers, 160, 161
National service: abolition, 176; and R.S.L., 68, 102, 103, 184, 208, 243; reintroduction, 218
National Treasurer of the R.S.L., 126, 241
Neagle, J. C., 88, 92, 97, 101, 126, 156, 236, 241
Neilson, H., 247
New Guinea, see Papua-New Guinea
Newington, W., 257
Newman, K. V., 101
News (Adelaide), 91
New South Wales branch: affiliation, 10, 11, 110; appeals tribunals, 44-7, 147; Asian conference (1963), 139; Dyett (criticisms), 48; ex-service-men's committee, 95; Howse (attacks on), 46; journal, 181; membership, 87, 88, 116, 117, 234, 235, (opinions) 243; officers, 236; pensions, 93; preference, 83-5; publicity officer, 183; sub-branches, 71, 112; tactics, 26; War Veterans' Homes, xxi; welfare activities, xxii
New Zealand, 247; repatriation benefits, 199; Returned Services Association, 211
Northcott Neurological Diagnostic Centre, xxii
Page, Dr (later Sir) Earle: meetings with Dyett, 38; Royal Commission on disability, 38, 159; soldier settlement (W.A.), 40
Page, M. J. D., 35
Papua-New Guinea branch, 240; Jehovah's Witnesses, 136; membership, 117, 234, 235, (referendum on) 88
Parliament: amendments in, 171; circularizing and lobbying members, 30, 44, 45, 63, 64, 167, 168, 170; members (relations with) 168, (representatives of League) 172-6, (questions by) 171, 172, (returned servicemen)
Index

Parliament—cont.
164, 167, 259; Prime Minister (deputations and representa-
tions), 155-9, 161, 258
Partially Blinded Soldiers' Association, 61, 63, 179
Pearce, Senator G. F., 11, 12, 23, 29, 30
Pensions, service: administration, xxv; comparisons (basic wage), 193, 194, (international) 198-
200; commutation, 28; disability, 136, (Royal Comis-
sion) 38, 157, 159; increases (1943), 89, (1948) 94, (1950)
100; introduction, 5, 6, 223; rates, 194, (1919) 17, (cam-
paign for increased) 89, 93-6, 99, 103, (co-operation with other organizations) 179, (in-
adegacy) 193, (special) xxv, 194; means test, 159; R.S.L.
(annual plan), 100, 104, 141, 213, 214, (campaign for) 66, 67, (influence) 188, 189, 198,
217, (pamphlet, 1949) 96, 182, (policy) 208, 243, (tactics) 94,
96, 104, 169; reduction, 60-6, 152, 217, (in value) 89, (represen-
tations) 158, 173, 180; widows', xxv, (inadequacy) 28,
(rates) 89-94, 194; see also Appeals tribunals
Pimentel, M. P., 262
Political parties: ex-service organ-
izations’ attitudes to, 6, 7, 247;
Nationalist (Bolton's relations), 7, 248; pre-election representa-
tions, 96, 169, 170; R.S.L. (con-
tact with), 177, 178, (proposal to form) 6, 229-31; see also Australian Labor Party
Pope, Lieutenant-Colonel H., 11
Preference, ex-servicemen's: action to secure, 29, 51-7, (World War II) 78-83; and
Preference—cont.
unions, 51; committee on (World War II), 75; criticisms of, 77; Dyett’s actions, 54, 55, 158; Labor government policy, 52-7, 79, 83, 220; legislation, xxviii, 83, (state) 82; opposition to, 220; R.S.L. (influence), 188, 195, (tactics) 148; Ryan dispute, 30-5; see also Commonwealth Public Service
Premiers’ Conference (1931), 62
Pressure groups: American, 170, 184, 207, 221, 259; British, 172, 187, 223, 259-60; distrust of, 223; effectiveness, 205; Japanese, 206
Queensland branch: and Japan (scrap iron), 71; journal, 181; membership, 116, 117, 234, 235, (policy views) 243, 244, (refer-
endum on) 87, 88; officers, 237; Volunteer Defence Corps, 73, 74; welfare activities, xxi
Raymont, E. V., 74, 93, 126, 241
Re-Establishment and Employ-
ment Act (1945), xxviii
Repatriation: benefits (compared with other countries), 198-200, (secured by R.S.L.) 189, 190; changing demands, 226-7; definition, xxiv; Depression, 65; government responsibility for, 6, 10, 75-6; Inter-Departmental Advisory Committee on Re-
construction, 75-6; public re-
action, 25; R.S.L. (demands on control), 17-19, (influence) 188-90, 196-8, 219, 220, (policy) 76, 170, 193, (tactics) 96, 170, 182, 184; see also Pensions, Appeals tribunals, Preference, Returned Servicemen's League Repatriation Act, xxiv, 76;
Index

Repatriation Act—cont.
   amendments, 81-2; anomalies, 76; retrospective extension (1940), 75

Repatriation Commission, xxiv, xxv, 17, 19, 26, 28, 67, 217

Repatriation Department, xxiv, xxv, 76

Returned Servicemen's League branches: finances, 114, 117; government, 118; journals, 181; members, 116, (facilities to aid) 257; officers, 236-40; organization and activities, 116; policy (influence on), 134; sub-branches, xix, xx, xxiii, 111-15, 131-3; welfare, 136, 191; see also named branches

Returned Servicemen's League (R.S.S. & A.I.L.A.), xix, xxix; objectives, xxiii; party politics, 6, 7, 209, 214, 215, 247; policy formulation and implementation, 7, 9, 70, 115, 140-5, 149, 208, 243-4; political future, 225-8; political party (proposal to form), 229-31; publicity, 181-3; Repatriation Commission, 19, 26, 28; social activities, xxiii; subscriptions, 37, 114, 115; welfare activities, xxi-xxiii, 114, 115

Returned Servicemen's League as pressure group, xxiii, xxix, 105, 205-8, 224, 228; Anzac tradition, 223-4; and government, 219; appeals tribunals, 42-8; basis (war service), 207-8; branch participation, 38, 42, 66; direct tactics, 101, 146-7, 164-5, 213, 215, (deputations) 155, 156, (Holland's use) 99, (Millhouse) 97, (representations) 148-64; effectiveness, 186, 198-201, 213-15; indirect tactics, 28-9, 68-9, 84-5, 102, 166, 184-5, 216, 226-7, (administrative officials) 176, 177, (other organizations) 178-81, (Parliament) 171, 172, (press and publicity) 30, 44-5, 63-4, 168-71, 181-4; journals, 12, 181; methods (compromise), 66, 67, 69, 88, 101, (conflict) 12-14, 25, 26, 30, 36, 37, 49, 88, 104, 155; parliamentarians, 167-72; pensions, 60-6, 93-6; politics and parties, 6, 177-8, 209, 214, 247; Public Service (examinations), 29, (preference) 51-7, 78-85, (retrenchments) 30, 45; social contacts, 163, 164; see also Dyett, Sir Gilbert

284
Index

Returned Soldiers' Associations, 5
Returned Soldiers' and Citizens' National Federation, 6, 7
Robb, L. A., 70
Rowe, R., 63, 162
Rural Reconstruction Commission, see War Service Land Settlement
Ryan, V. H., 30-5, 157, 173, 174, 185, 214, 215

Sampson, Burford, 44, 173, 174
Scullin, Rt Hon. J. H.: and Dyett, 89, 158; pensions, 60-5; preference, 52-7; R.S.L.'s attitude, 49
Smith's Weekly (Sydney), 36, 267
Soldiers' and Sailors' Fathers' Association, 14
Soldiers' National Political Party, 7
Soldier settlement, see War Service Land Settlement
South African Soldiers' Association, 14
South Australian branch: and National Presidency, 59; journal, 181; membership, 116-17, 234-5, (referendum on) 87, 88; national government, 71; officers, 237, 238; policy, 243-4; preference (campaign), 51; (state legislation) 82; public relations, 183; sub-branches, 112; tactics, 26, (parliamentary questions) 172; welfare activities, xxi
Sowden, Sir William J., 262
Spiegel, J. P., 211
Stagg, W. J., 45, 59, 64, 175, 236, 251
Stock Exchange Company, 14
Stouffer, S. A., 207
Street, G. A., 74, 164
Sun (Melbourne), 90, 91
Sun (Sydney), 96
Swartz, Hon. R. W. C., 164
Sydney and Suburban Timber Merchants' Association, 180

Tasmanian branch, 11; and National Presidency, 59; Asian conference, 140; journal, 181; membership, 116-17, 234-5, (referendum on) 87, 88; officers, 239; tactics, 170; welfare activities, xxi
Teece, Reverend Ashley, 28
Todd, K. H., 155
Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Soldiers' Association, 179
Treloar, Major J. L., 35
Tubercular Soldiers' Association, 63, 181
Tuberculosis, pension for, 67, 260
Turnbull, Ernest, 30-8 passim, 59, 168, 214, 236-7

United States of America, 184, 199, 211, 217

Vasey, Mrs George, 90
Victorian branch: and National Presidency, 59, (Dyett) 36, 57, 60; finances, 37, 38; gratuities, 22; journal, 181; membership, 116, 117, 234, 235, (decline) 36, 37, (referendum on) 87, 88; officers, 236, 237; pensions, 96; policy, 243, 244; publicity, 183; preference, 52-6, (state legislation) 82; retrenchment, 147; sub-branches, 112, 133; tactics, 26, 172; welfare activities, xxi
Vietnam, 226
Volunteer Defence Corps, 73, 74, 192, 268

285
Index

War gratuities, see Gratuities
War service homes: allocation for, 51, (co-operation with other organizations) 180; eligibility, xxv-xxvi; importance (R.S.L. view), 208, 243; loans (increased), 100, 218, (interest reductions) 66; post-World War II, 89; R.S.L. influence and representations, 156, 160, 173, 188, 195, 197; widows' rights, 190
War Service Homes Act (1918-64), xxiv, xxv
War Service Homes Commission (later War Service Homes Division), xxvi, 35, 48, 177, 219, 220
War Service Land Settlement: Commonwealth grants, 39-42, 50-2; financial difficulties, 38-42; importance (R.S.L. views), 243; introduction, xxvi-xxvii; moratorium, 189; Pike inquiry, 42, 261; post-World War II, 89; R.S.L. influence, 38, 188, 191; Rural Reconstruction Commission, xxvii, 75, 155, 258
War Widows' Guild, 90

We Asked the Commonwealth Government and Now We Ask You, 96, 170, 182
Webster, J., 174
Wertheimer, J., 94, 96
West Australian branch: affiliation, 11; Asian conference (1963), 140; co-operation with other organizations, 179; journal, 181; membership, 116, 117, 234, 235, (referendum on) 87, 88; National Presidency, 59, (Dyett) 57; officers, 238, 239; pensions, 95; preference, 51, 80; soldier settlement, 40, 41, 150-2; tactics, 26; welfare activities, xxi
White, Sir Brudenell, 73, 74
White, T. W. W., 76, 174
White Australia policy, 68, 208, 220
Widows and Widowed Mothers' Association, 181
Widows' pensions, xxv, 28, 89-92, 194
Willey, R. J., 206
World (Hobart), 14
Yeo, Sir William, 126, 256
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