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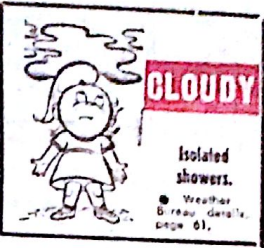
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LAST RACE

IS IT YOUR BOY?

Great muddle over call-up

From PETER SMARK

CANBERRA, Wednesday. — Confusion reigned in Canberra today over the compulsory call-up of 20-year-old youths announced by the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, last night.

Cabinet ministers are bewildered as to how the draft will work.

The only thing clear is that married men will be exempt and that university and technical college diploma students will be given automatic deferment of service obligation.

In some cases this could lead to total exemption.

That those who are to be conscripted will be chosen by a form of lottery seems certain.

But the question of who should be exempted from the ballot is completely unsettled.

Because of the age group selected, it is believed the Government will pay the conscripts the full military wage — £16/16/- a week plus free food and lodgings for unmarried men and £22/16/- a week for married men.

The decision to introduce conscription from the middle of next year, starting with the call-up of one 20-year-old man in every 20 for two years' service, was taken only in the past few days.

The complex administration of deciding how the scheme is to work, of balancing the needs of the economy and determining what is fair in relation to the needs of the scheme, is only in the early stages of discussion.

The conscription plan provides for:

- Registration of all youths in the year they turn 20.

- A call-up of 4200 youths in the second half of next year and a call-up of about 6900 youths in each succeeding year for three years.

- Protection of civilian jobs during the two-year draft period. It was learned today

from informed Government sources that Cabinet has decided that a wide range of exemptions should be allowed.

Those exempted are expected to include apprentices in protected industry and a range of other classifications.

But in specific terms there has been no clear decision on what is to be named a protected industry or what the other classifications for exemption will be.

Obviously these young men cannot be expected to return to their old jobs to work at apprentices' wages until their training period is completed.

Some form of government subsidy to employers may be decided on, to enable the returning young men to be paid full tradesmen's wages — or close to this figure — while they finish their apprenticeships.

The Government is believed to be considering a proposal that exemptions should be made on compassionate grounds in some cases.

This, it agreed to, would particularly apply to young men who are the sole supporters of widowed or deserted mothers with large families.

The Government will be under the scrutiny of the whole of Australia as it establishes how the conscription system will work.

Any sign of political favor to any group in the community will bring a storm of protest down on the Government.

Government officials say the Country Party wants primary industry to be declared a protected industry with workers on the land immune from the draft.

But claims by all sections of industry for special protection are expected to flood the Cabinet room, and there is no certainty that this special status will be given to rural workers.

Out of this swamp of confusion and contradiction only one thing is sure — the unskilled city worker aged 20 will not be given exemption.

Which
Johnny
goes to
war?

Sir Robert Menzies last night gave a pledge that the civilian employment of conscripted youths will be protected.

But how this is to apply to apprentices not in industries classified as protected has not been decided.

The ministers now have to decide what is to be done at the end of a two-year service term for young men taken away from their civilian jobs in the middle of an apprenticeship course.



Decision on migrants: P2

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