

Conscription campaigns in australia: ww1



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Can the Australia government's conscription during World War I be considered a public relations campaign? Why or why not? What specific "strategies" were used to encourage the Australian community to support (or not) conscription? Refer to relevant public relations theories in your response. In your response you will need to consider the notion of a public relations campaign. Compare your understanding of a public relations campaign to similar events. Compare this in terms of the historical development of public relations at that time.

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Public relation and the is the art of winning people's hearts so it is very important for us to fully understanding it by using the relevant examples from the past because it is much easier for us to analyze these samples' challenges , achievements and methods in order to apply into the current situation. By this action we can minimize not only the costs which can be incurred but also the risks of failure which we might dealing with.

So let's moving on to the question about the Australian Government's conscription during the World War I. Personally, I think it is a public relation campaign because the definition of an campaign is an " organized activity or operation designed to attain a political, social or commercial goal"(Bobbit and Sullivan, 2005, p. 32). Hence, a public relations campaign, according to Kendall, are considered as a "" concerted effort of an organization to build socially responsible relationships by achieving research-based goals through the application of communication strategies and the measurement of outcomes". Let's take a closer look at some keywords such as : " organized

activity”, “ political goal”, “ build socially responsible relationship”, “ application of communication strategies “ and “ the measurement of outcomes” and think about conscription of Australian Government’s in World War I or more specifically under the lead of Billy Hughes- The Prime Minister. First of all, we can see here this conscription is and “ organized activity” which require a lot of preparation for Yes vote and in more particularly, Mark Sheehan(2007) states that:” the campaign to persuade voters went beyond the methods used in recruiting”. In addition, this campaign served a “ political goal “ which is the need to win the war or in other word to extend conscription so that men could be sent to reinforce the front line in Europe to serve for the World War I. Thirdly, this campaign is trying to “ build socially responsible relationship” by called ‘ shirkers’ and ‘ traitors’ to many eligible men over the age of 21 by using posters and speeches in order to persuade targeted men ‘ eligible’ to enlist. Finally, it is the “ application of communication strategies” because of using “ theatres, cinema, town halls, sporting events and even beaches” in the campaign in 1917 and this is noted by Carlyon (p. 525) and it also failed in two referendums-which is a “ measurement of outcome”. These are the proofs that the conscription occurred in World War I is a public relations campaign. But the question here is why it is failed in considered about the strategies of Yes- voters, the length of campaign, the target public and so on...

To answer this question we need to go through a bit about history

Let’s first start with the definition of conscription which “ is compulsory enlistment in the armed forces”. This means that it is compulsory with every men in the age bracket. In 1916, Australia had that conscription but it

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maintain inside Australian territory and that's why Billy Hughes' public relation campaign start in order to extend conscription so that men could be sent to reinforce the front line in Europe. And this is where the battle of voting started for overseas military service that split the community.

Secondly, I want to talk briefly about the anti- conscription with we might call the No campaign of the labor movement and the member was in the Labor Party due to the threat to the white Australian working man. And Hughes' pro-war enthusiasm made him into deep conflict with the Queensland Australian Labor Party Premier, T. J. Ryan. Therefore, Ryan did everything in his abilities to defeat conscription.

Thirdly, let's moving on the for- conscription which we called the Yes vote, in this part we will discuss the strategies and also some of important points of this campaign. About the member, this campaign was strongly supported by the business community who were the benefiter substantially from the introduction of conscription as suppliers of arms, uniforms and equipment, and by those who saw loyalty to God and Empire as paramount.

By using not only propaganda and dissemination of information but also the sophisticated two-way asymmetric activity of opinion leaders- Billy Hughes was successful in create public opinion in the conscription in World War I. Cameron et al (2007, p. 175) stated that opinion leaders frequently act as catalysts in the formation of public opinion by using mass media to make opinion flows from these leaders to the public. The theory in this campaign is media- dependency theory which is people who know little about the subject need to depend on mass media for their source of information and opinions.

In addition, there are two ways of thinking (yes and no for conscription) which is framing theory because of journalists and public relation personnel support a specific feature of a issue.

The strategies of this campaign can be summaries as followed:

1. Creating Government supported grass-root groups in each state (Robson 1970, p. 99) in order to make it easier for opinion leaders to persuade the voters of the value of offering up their sons or husbands in what they thought “ the most noble of fights”.
2. Prime Minister Billy Hughes indicated in 1916 “ cabled all mayors and shire presidents throughout the Commonwealth asking to take immediate steps to develop vigorous local organizations” (Robson 1970, p. 106). And Hughes a strong network with the Premier of New South Wales, a former Prime Minister, and the Anglican Primate of Australia and the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney (Carlyon 2006, p. 268). In addition, Dame Nellie Melba sang at events organized to support for the Yes vote and influence women (Robson 1970, p. 107). The “ mainstream press, city and country” (Carlyon 2006, p258) also supported under Hughes’s call for Yes -vote in conscription campaign.
3. Understood that soldiers at the front were a vital vote for this campaign, Hughes developed a Soldier’s Manifesto and sought wide distribution a month before the referendum. For this task he relied on war correspondent Keith Murdoch. Through his network in the military Murdoch arranged delivery of the Manifesto for each soldier and also distribution to the British press. Moreover, he also organized meetings of soldiers which would carry resolutions asking the voters at home to

vote yes. Despite the Prime Minister's efforts the vote of the serving soldiers was uncertain.

4. In a second attempt in 1917, Hughes broadened the use of persuasive tactics and pointed out Claude McKay, a former journalist and writer, to work on the promotion of the campaign by taking place on the back of other events and to that extent caught the public unaware and unprepared to debate or question the organizers. And in this time, every mass media are used but it still lead to a failure for Hughes and Yes -voters which is quite narrowly 49 percent over 51 percent.

So in summary, from 1916 to 1917, Hughes created 2 referendums which is voting for extend conscription from within Australia territory to Western Front Line for the call of England in World War 1 but both two times he failed closely although he tried really hard in term of public relations campaign by the using of two way information and mass media.

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Imagine that the Australian government wants to re-introduce conscription in 2013. You can choose to take the pro-conscription view (and support the government) or the anti-conscription view. How would you implement a campaign given your understanding of public relations theory, its role, and society today? You will need to break down the campaign into elements (such as goal, target public, strategies and evaluation). Demonstrate how these elements would be realized in 2013. Strategies need to be realistic, achievable and theoretically sound, determined through appropriate research. You can use the same strategies as the historical campaign, if you

think it is relevant. Or you can come up with your own ideas. Don't worry about budget, imagine money is no object.

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If I'm leader of the pro-conscription view I will think about the moves of Billy Hughes in the old times and analysis these moves then based on these background I will update it because remembering that two referendums were closed with very narrow results 49 percent over 51 percent in the first time and the second time with a slightly bigger gap. So in my opinion, these results reflect a good trend but not right methods which need to improve by using some of the public relations theories and persuasion plus mass media effect in modern life. That's why some of the commentators while trying to explain the failure of Billy Hughes stated that it might be the issues of providing a focus for a lot of different points of view about the war. In particular, there were some people opposed the war while others were opposed to conscription as a principle. And because at that time, the economy was in bad shape therefore others were saying that they were hurt by the economic situation hence the World War I, and so on.... Consequently, public opinions are diverting in too many ways which are hard to unite because people were not, but they all agreed on the conscription question, and the issue gave them all a chance to express their opposition.

In 1917 in an attempt, Hughes held another vote on the conscription and in this time he actually had a majority in both Houses of Parliament, and did not need the vote but because of his desire, he want to give the people another chance to overcome what he called as their great mistake in rejecting

conscription the previous year - a chance to correct themselves. But in controversy, the campaign was again fall in the wrong way of his thought, and conscription was again defeated, this time by a slightly larger margin. So in this time we need to work out again about the theory of publicity's opinions and the method in order to improve the result.

So let's start with goal and target public and I think it probably the same with the old time which will be more than 51 percent voting in the referendum by using these target public such as followed. Firstly, the business man who support for the conscription and benefit because of the war, they can be weapon companies and related industries or people who faithful with British Government, Australian Government or Catholic Church. The reason why we need to target these groups because this group is what we called the ground which we can build a pyramid on that, these groups will contribute the money and the enthusiasm to do anything to support for the conscription. The second part of public which we need to target is the Australian women who might be the mothers, wives, girlfriends, sisters, and daughters of the listed soldiers which can support or anti our votes. About the importance of women in this context , we need to remind a bit about history with the withdrawal of about half a million men in 1916, and more clearly man is in crisis of going to work because of their direct replacement by women which will be happen if we have a conscription currently. Finally, there is one target who Billy Hughes were targeted but were not succeed and this is soldiers or most importantly the up front-soldiers who are fighting. Because these man can be described as " role model" which are called " informal opinion leaders". According to Wilcox, " informal opinion leaders" are those " who

have clout with peers because of some special characteristic. They may be role models who are admired and emulated or opinion leaders who can exert peer pressure on others to go along with something. In general, informal opinion leaders exert considerable influence on their peer groups by being highly informed, articulate, and credible on particular issues. " Consequently, in this case, if we want to recruit more soldiers who are enlisted, we need to create a " role model" which everyone must know, want to know, inspired by his/her. If we can do that the morale of the soldiers who are already enlisted or thought about enlisting will be very high which will benefit for our public relations campaign not like Billy Hughes's campaign.

In the methods section, I think we need to base on the old times method because basically they are not on the wrong tracks but sharpen it by using mass media and remember technology in the modern life. In addition , keeping in mind that when we using mass media effects , we need to care about some theories of it which are agenda- setting theory, framing theory and lastly but also most importantly conflict theory. Let's start with the definition of mass media effects: " traditional media, implies that information from a public relations source can be efficiently and rapidly disseminated to literally millions of people."(Wilcox, 2013). Hence, a detailed recent research carried by professors and students at University of Technology in Sydney (UTS) showed that 55 percentage of the stories in leading Australian dailies come from what we called public relation sources. Therefore, the importance of mass media with public relation is undeniable with the appearance of public relations people who uses mass media to become major players in forming public opinion because of their " hot news" which are coming in the

first compare to others. Understanding the importance of mass media is easy but how to use mass media require an understanding of theories which started by agenda- setting theory that is defined by Klapper as limited-effects model of mass media, media content sets the agenda for public discussion, and he stated that " mass medial ordinarily does not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause for audience effects, but rather functions among and through a nexus of mediating factors and influence." Therefore, in the theme of this theory, we need to have a public relations campaign which not only setting the time for people to come back and follow but also can convey the set of attributes about conscription by using mass media day by day which leading to impact what audiences think about, according to Patricia Curtin, Qi Qiu and Spiro Khiousis. Thirdly, framing theory is a theory which related to journalist and how they " frame" the story by choosing the particular facts, themes, solutions or others features... And by that, journalists can create a different point of views for targeted public. That's why political science Professors Shanto Iyengar an Donal Kinder note how " public relations professional working for political campaigns seek to emphasize consideration that will help voters decide in their favor, often enlisted the expertise of a popular leader, and to downplay the considerations that will hurt their cause or candidate." In this case, we can use journalists to protect our side by framing conscription as good deed while the cause effects at unavoidable or fair price which we need to pay.

Finally, the conflict is about disagreement between two or more individuals, groups, organizations, or communities because of the gap in interests. As the result, conflict theory is " research about differences among individuals or

groups and explains conflicting interests, goals, values, or desires. Public opinion often reflects such different, or even conflicting, views, attitudes, and behaviors." At this point, we can see how important the conflict theory is, keep in mind that it was what Billy Hughes missed, the unification of public opinions because of a lack of researches at those times which we can do easily by using technology such as Facebook, debating on YouTube, television or mass media. By unifying so many differences or in other words diversities of the public, we can create an enthusiasm "army" to support for our vote.

About the evaluation, because of the development of technology, it is quite easy now for us to know whether we do the right thing by using poll. Poll can be used likely everywhere on the internet (for example Facebook, YouTube, or other social networks like Twitter, if the websites don't have we can use the like button to estimate it or number of views could be a good indicator), in the subway, shopping mall or other common places by using the face-to-face methods. Remember that we can use the mass media to know how much attention we could draw.

References:

Dennis L. Wilcox