

honour of our cause. What our ultimate fate will be we do not know; but this we do know—that traitors and coercionists are up against a problem that nothing but death can solve. To you, our comrades, we say, Stand firm; believe no lies and faked reports that may be circulated with the purpose of weakening the stand that we are making, or with the purpose of causing dissension in the ranks of the fighters for freedom and justice.

This was signed by the thirteen. They had resolved to be faithful even unto death. They went hand in hand as near to death as military persecution was able and willing to bring them. And to them was given the victory.

They were helped throughout not only by the Labour Congress, but also by the personal services and public appeals of devoted men and women who had long stood by them, had taken turns with them at speaking in the streets, watched their cases in the courts, visited them when permitted in prison or barracks, and rejoiced with them on their release. On Sunday, July 30th, a meeting which the "Repeal" described as "the largest, most enthusiastic and most orderly ever held in Christchurch" welcomed some of the boys back from the island.

On July 23rd, the boys scored a legal success. Another Court was held, not on the island this time, but in the Courthouse at Lyttelton. The boys were represented by counsel, the senior magistrate, Mr. Bishop, was on the bench, and the Court was crowded with spectators. The adjourned case against Robson and fresh charges against the other lads were heard. Mr. Cassidy, for the defendants, argued that the regulations on which Lieutenant Macdonald had acted had never been gazetted, and there was no proof that they had the approval of the Minister. Further, they were contradicted in essential features by the recent decisions of the Cabinet

which had been signed by the Premier and the Defence Minister. The magistrate upheld the contention and dismissed all the charges.

It follows that the sentences imposed by the other magistrate in the officers' kitchen were illegal.

Even before Mr. Bishop's decision it had become apparent to the public that the boys were winning. The *Lyttelton Times*, a conscriptionist paper, but a comparatively fair one, wrote as far back as July 4th:

"The salient fact is that military detention is serving no good purpose. The resisters are not drilling, and there is no reason to anticipate that they will drill, while it is obvious that they cannot be kept at the fort indefinitely. The situation, in fact, is becoming absurd."

Revised regulations issued early in August ignored the signed promise of the Cabinet and prescribed for offenders in military detention a daily routine comprising sand-polishing armaments, squad drill and semaphore drill. On October 1st, three youths who had refused to do military work on the island received nominal sentences, the magistrate, Mr. Bishop, remarking (as reported in the *Worker*) that "he was sick of the whole business, as everyone concerned was."

THE BANKRUPTCY OF COERCION.

Military detention had failed, and the Minister for Defence did not know what to do next. He said in Parliament on August 19th, that he was "very sorry" the boys were on Ripa Island, and he "wished to goodness they would comply with the law and so get rid of this trouble." He meant—get him out of his troubles. But there is only one way out, and he or his successors will have to realise that conscription in a modern British community simply cannot be enforced.