

SOURCE 9

Extract from a government report on the possibility of extending conscription to married men,
April 1916
(PRO ref: CAB 37/145/7)

HOW TO USE THIS SOURCE TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE BIG QUESTION :

Look carefully at this source and consider what it tells you about why conscription was introduced and how people were affected by it. You should consider:

ASK YOURSELF:

- What are the main attitudes towards conscription?
- How reliable is this as a view of how the majority of people felt?
- What impression do you get of the government's attitude towards extending conscription to married men?

SOURCE 9

MEMORANDUM ON RECRUITING.

THERE seem to be three main currents of opinion:—

1. Those who desire compulsion because they think it the fairest system. Their catch-word is “equality of sacrifice.”
2. Those who hate compulsion in itself, and still more for what it may lead to.
3. Those who are opposed to compulsion generally, but are prepared for that or for almost anything else which will help to victory.

I therefore venture to urge that the Government should, without any further delay, state its policy on recruiting.

May we not therefore safely go as far as to say—

1. The Government is opposed to compulsion unless it be shown to be necessary in order to procure the numbers which are both requisite and available for military purposes.

2. If it is made clear that we have not succeeded in obtaining those numbers under our present arrangements, the Government is quite prepared to adopt a further measure of compulsion in order to obtain them.

3. In considering what numbers are requisite and available for our army, regard must be had, not only to what is desirable from a strictly military point of view, but also to what is necessary in order to maintain the industrial and financial resources, without which victory is unobtainable.

April 4, 1916.