

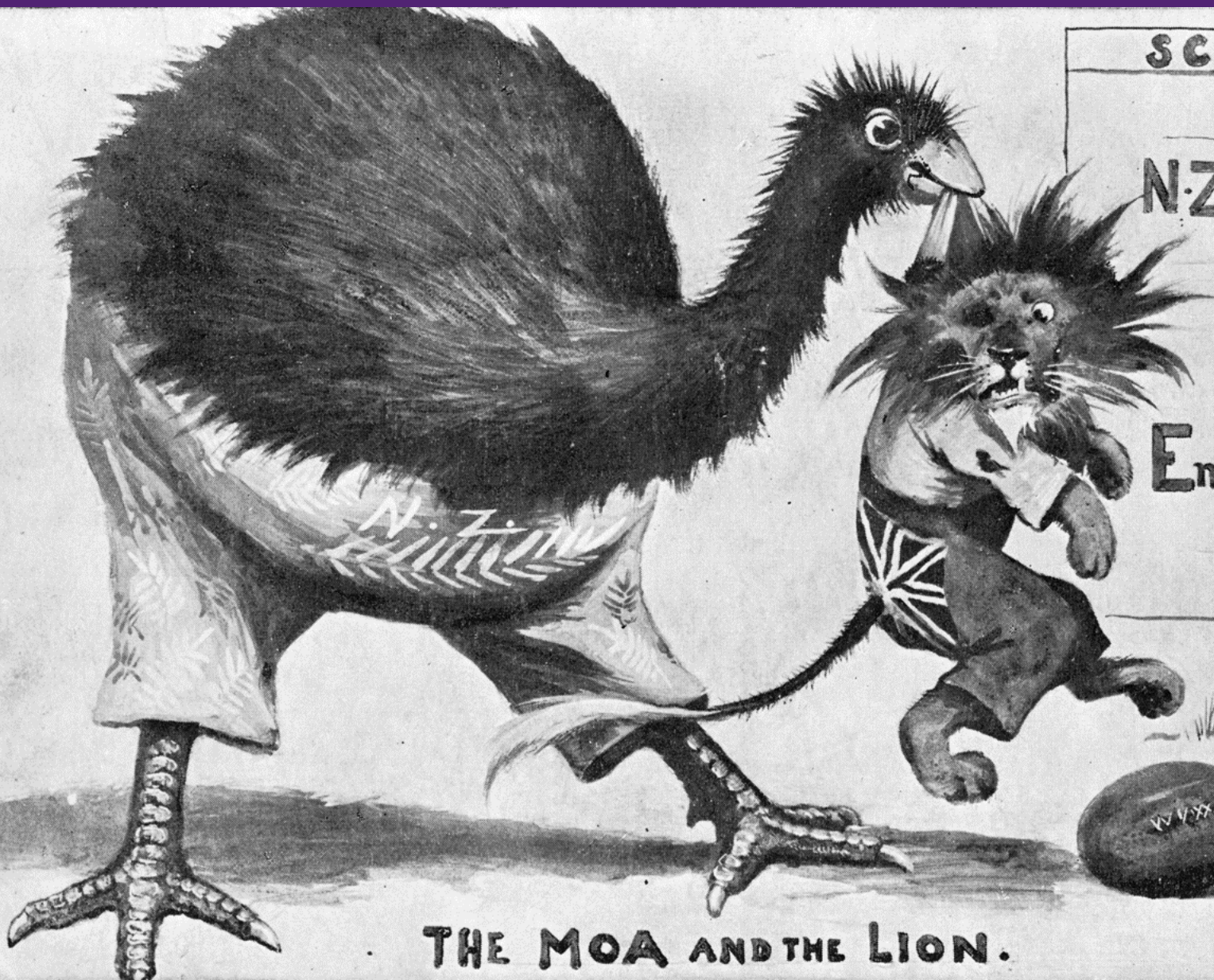
The Battle for New Zealand Rugby

Class conflict and sacrifice 1915-25



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SCORE.	
	POINTS.
N.Z.	829.
Eng.	39.

THE MOA AND THE LION.

T. Lloyd

The first thing to be considered is whether the Rugby League is justifiable or not. Its players are all wage-earners, home-keepers and home defenders. The game keeps them well equipped in physical condition, a condition which the Territorials at Home are devoting weeks and even months of physical culture to obtain. Rugby League, like racing, is a matter of fitness and it would be a serious business to let the thing lapse.

H.T. Thacker, Lyttelton Times, 24 April 1915





It is fitting that the opening up of the war campaign so far as the New Zealanders are concerned should occur on the eve of the opening of the football season. This fact may bring it home to the shirkers as nothing else has done the necessity of dropping the ball to take up the rifle. There are not many players in Dunedin—thanks be! —who have failed to respond to the call to arms—the depleted ranks of the various clubs is evidence of that, but the few who remain to play while their club mates go out to fight may be brought to a realisation of their responsibilities.

Otago Witness, 5 May 1915

Why not pull the blinds down and forbid the sun to shine while the war is on? It was not so at the front. The men indulged in games whenever they had the opportunity. At this time more than any other something was required to occupy the mind. Physical culture formed an important part of the training of Kitchener's Army. The secret of the splendid work done by the British soldiers in the retreat from Mons and Courtrai was that they were physically fit. Fresh air, exercise, and good food had put them in the best of fettle.

All could not go to the front for the economic machine must go on. There must be plenty of labour. Labour was the human link between the tools of destruction and the fields of production. Labour was now coming into its own. A healthy mind required a healthy body.

T.H. Thacker, *Grey River Argus*, 28 May 1915

WORLD'S STORES



*NEW ZEALAND
offers her best.*

New Zealand Butter

It is a crying shame to see so many men of just the right stamp of fighting material donning their jerseys each Saturday, thinking more of local honours and distinction than their country's call How those players can go on playing football while their representatives and fellow-players — alas, too few - are laying down their lives is unintelligible.

The Press, 29 May 1915


"This is not the time to play Games" (Lord Roberts)

RUGBY UNION FOOTBALLERS
are
DOING THEIR DUTY
over **90%** have enlisted



"Every player who represented England in Rugby international matches last year has joined the colours."—Extract from *The Times*, November 30, 1914.

BRITISH ATHLETES!
Will you follow this
GLORIOUS EXAMPLE ?

DOMINION OF  NEW ZEALAND.

WAR CENSUS.

NATIONAL REGISTRATION ACT, 1915.

By PROCLAMATION issued under the above Act, EVERY MALE Resident of New Zealand between the ages of SEVENTEEN and SIXTY is required to register
NOT LATER THAN TUESDAY, 9th NOVEMBER, 1915.

A PERSONAL SCHEDULE
must be filled in by every person to whom the Proclamation applies. The schedule, on being completed, is to be placed in the addressed envelope provided, and handed to an officer of the Post and Telegraph Department, or posted to the Government Statistician at Wellington. POSTAGE FREE.

SCHEDULES ARE AVAILABLE AT ALL POST-OFFICES THROUGHOUT THE DOMINION.

Any person who fails to furnish the particulars required, or who makes any false statement, is liable to
A FINE OF £100 OR IMPRISONMENT FOR SIX MONTHS.

The Register to be compiled is purely a CIVIL REGISTER for the purpose of ascertaining the resources of the Dominion in men, and the registration DOES NOT INVOLVE ENLISTMENT, NOR IS IT IN SUBSTITUTION FOR THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF ENLISTMENT. Those desirous of enlisting can obtain enlistment forms at the nearest post-office or Defence Office.

WARNING! The obligation to register is a personal one. The fact that a form has not been addressed to, or received by any person DOES NOT ABSOLVE HIM from responsibility to register. ANY PERSON LIABLE TO REGISTER WHO REFUSES, FAILS, OR NEGLECTS TO DO SO WILL BE PROSECUTED.

ALL INFORMATION WILL BE STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

(BY ORDER) **MALCOLM FRASER,**
Government Statistician.

Wellington, 18th October, 1915.

It seems hardly fair, apart from the ethics of the football codes, that a body which is endeavouring to assist the country in times of grave national peril should lose players to another body, the officials of which apparently do not consider that recruiting should concern them.... No sports body should cater for single men of military age; their place is in the ranks with their brave comrades whose athletic training helped to win renown for New Zealand arms.

New Zealand Herald, 17 May 1916

Although the whole civilised world is still engaged in a life and death struggle, and so far no man can foresee the time of its ending, yet in many directions even now, there is a marked tendency to prepare for post-war conditions ... and it is fitting that our sport should also look to the future, and that Rugby football should lie animated by the broader spirit which the war has brought about.

For nearly three years thousands of Rugby players from all parts of the world have been fighting side by side in freedom's cause, and in the intervals of lighting, all rival codes forgotten, have engaged in friendly combat on the football fields. Is there any reason why this bond of brotherhood formed on the battle-grounds of Europe should be broken when peace returns?

Sympathy with the difficulties of the working man who played the game was never wasted by those in authority. Because he was of a different, class was sufficient reason why he should have to suffer certain disabilities. But amid the horrors of this ghastly war are some crumbs of comfort. Each grade of social life has learned to look upon others with greater respect than ever before in the history of the nation. Little separates the University man or the man in whose veins flows Norman blood, from the Rugby miner of South Wales, or the League mill operator of Lancashire, when all stand face to face with death.



The Sun, 25 July 1917

What would be said if England kept in command of an Army Corps a commander who had served his country for 30 years but had fallen behind the times? It is this crusted conservatism that must be broken down.

Sun, 20 April 1918

Such restrictions on self-government do not tend to unify us as sportsmen and are quite contrary to the principles wisely laid down years ago by English statesmen of granting almost complete autonomy to dominate in respect to local conditions.

Lyttelton Times, 24 July 1918

Why should any Northern Union player, who is not an out and out professional, not be allowed to play either game if he so wish? The men are asked to fight shoulder to shoulder, and yet should not be allowed to play together. The whole thing is ridiculous, and to my way of thinking the men when they return, if they are still inclined to play football will not stop to consider the question of Rugby and Northern Union ...

Auckland Star, 25 August 1917

Resolution from Southland RFU

To commemorate the glorious victory of the allied arms in the fight for right and justice and to mark our appreciation of the splendid sacrifice of our footballers in the various war zones the New Zealand Union be asked to recommend to the English Union the removal from the 'black list' all disqualified players, all suspended players, and all participants in the Northern Union code who have not transgressed, been disqualified, or suspended since the declaration of peace.



New Zealand Herald, 20 September 1919

The Rugby Union is amateur, and it will remain so. It makes and wishes to make no reflection on other people who may hold different views, it merely abides by its own There is no real reason, beyond social tradition and upbringing, why a man with football skill should not receive payment. There is, of course, no such thing as professional sport, for where money becomes a consideration there is no sport, but that is not quite the point. Athletic skill which is paid for has nothing to do with sport; it is a marketable commodity like tea or sugar, and is used to attract paying audiences, part of the gate money being used to remunerate the players.

Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News, 4 October 1919

These proposals are obviously framed with the view of appealing to the spectacular likings of the public. They are not based on the interests and wishes of amateur players, and therein they infringe the fundamental principle on which Rugby football is played and governed in the United Kingdom, namely that the sport is a means of physical training and enjoyment for those who play it, and not an entertainment for the amusement of the public.

Yorkshire Post, 11 October 1920