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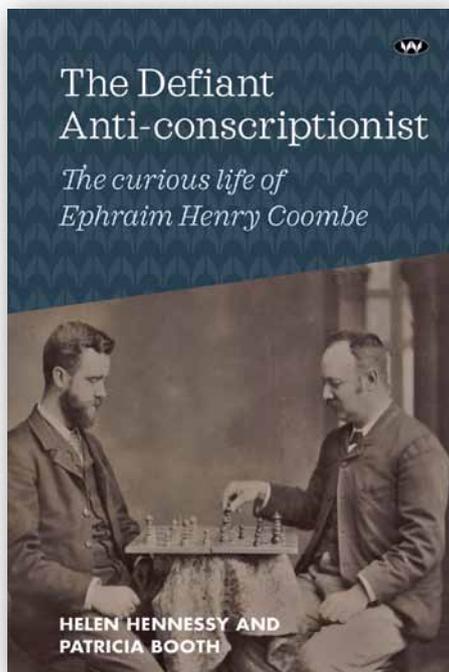
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## The Defiant Anti-conscriptionist

*The curious life of E.H. Coombe*

by Helen Hennessy, Patricia Booth

10 October 2022, Biography, RRP \$39.95, PB, ISBN 9781743059616



Ephraim Henry (Harry) Coombe was a 'self-made man' of strong principles. With no more than six years of formal schooling, he became a journalist, newspaper editor and member of parliament, representing the Barossa District for a total of 14 years. He advocated for proportional voting, women's suffrage, the extension of the railway to country towns, and against the closure of Lutheran schools during the First World War.

But his steadfast anti-conscription stance led to his persecution, and many of his parliamentary colleagues labelled him a coward, a traitor to the men at the Front, and disloyal to King and country. In 1917 he was prosecuted under the *War Precautions Act*, at a trial deliberately held in his electorate, for using words that were 'likely to prejudice recruiting'. Shortly afterwards Harry suffered a sudden seizure while speaking at a public rally, and died a week later at the age of 58.

Determined to walk his own path, Harry is remembered as a man willing to stand up for his beliefs. A hero of the working class and many others in the community, the curious life of E.H. Coombe placed Gawler and its region firmly on the map.

**Helen Hennessy** experienced a varied career as a library manager, teacher, local historian and a community engagement officer with the CFS, Helen Hennessy is now able to devote her time to researching and writing history. In 2019 she was awarded the title of South Australian Regional Historian by the History Council of South Australia.

**Patricia Booth** is the great-granddaughter of E.H. Coombe and she spent her early years with his second son James Bright and his wife, Alma (née Sauer). Many stories were told about Harry and the Coombe family, which she took to heart. Even as a child, it was obvious to her that her great-grandfather's tragic death had changed the course of her grandfather's life. Now Harry's story can be told to a wider audience.