

91436R



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

QUALIFY FOR THE FUTURE WORLD
KIA NOHO TAKATŪ KI TŌ ĀMUA AO!

Level 3 History, 2015

91436 Analyse evidence relating to an historical event of significance to New Zealanders

2.00 p.m. Friday 20 November 2015
Credits: Four

RESOURCE BOOKLET

Refer to this booklet to answer the questions for History 91436.

Check that this booklet has pages 2–10 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

YOU MAY KEEP THIS BOOKLET AT THE END OF THE EXAMINATION.

COLIN SCRIMGEOUR: A FORGOTTEN 'SIGNIFICANT' PERSON IN NEW ZEALAND HISTORY?

INTRODUCTION

Colin Graham Scrimgeour was born at Wairoa on 30 January 1903. He left school at the age of 11 and unsuccessfully tried to enlist for service in the First World War. He was employed at a freezing works and became a union delegate before he was 15. His father died in 1920 and his mother the following year; her challenge to Colin to make something of his life led him to offer himself for home mission work in the Methodist Church of New Zealand. Although he was never ordained as a Methodist minister, he used the title Reverend to great effect.

During the great depression, Uncle Scrim, as Colin Scrimgeour was known at the time, became one of New Zealand's most popular citizens. His Fellowship of the Friendly Road, based on his radio station 1ZR, brought radio evangelism to this country. His Sunday evening broadcasts offered comfort and hope to the tens of thousands of people who were impoverished and out of work. He encouraged them to believe that good times could come again.

On the Sunday evening before the 1935 general election, Scrimgeour's 'Man in the Street' broadcast was jammed, probably on the orders of the Director General of the Post and Telegraph Department. The leaders of the Coalition government feared that Scrimgeour would encourage voters to support the New Zealand Labour Party. Although he never joined a political party, he was sympathetic towards Labour's economic policies and its attitude to the smaller B radio stations. The controversy contributed to Labour's sweeping victory at the polls and further enhanced Scrimgeour's popularity. In 1936, he appeared in a feature film, *On the Friendly Road*, made by Rudall Hayward.

From 1936, Scrim headed the Labour government's highly successful National Commercial Broadcasting Service. But he also courted controversy for himself. Scrimgeour's position was weakened by the death of the Prime Minister, Michael Joseph Savage, in March 1940, which removed his main supporter and protector in the Labour cabinet. Savage's successor, Peter Fraser, and Scrimgeour were implacable enemies and over the following years they clashed on a number of occasions.

Although nearly 40, the head of a government department, and suffering from heart problems, Scrimgeour was called up for military service in 1942. With the help of Air Vice Marshall Leonard Isitt he managed to secure a transfer into the Royal New Zealand Air Force, in which he served as a



Colin Graham Scrimgeour, ca 1930–1939.
Photo by Clifton Firth

Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland
Libraries, 34-S4A

INTRODUCTION *continued*

clerk. His conscription was seen by some as a case of victimisation, and was compounded when the government dismissed him from his broadcasting position in June 1943.

At the 1943 general election he stood unsuccessfully as an independent candidate against Fraser in Wellington Central. In November 1944 he was discharged from the RNZAF and, despite wartime restrictions, special arrangements were made to fly him and his family to Australia.

Returning to New Zealand in 1968, Scrim set out to play a leading role in television, but that dream ended when he had a series of heart attacks in 1971. Then he worked on his autobiography, of which only *The Scrim–Lee Papers*, written with John A. Lee (a close friend and political activist), was published. Scrimgeour died on 16 January 1987.

Adapted from Allan K. Davidson. 'Scrimgeour, Colin Graham', from the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*. *Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 11-Feb-2014 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4s16/scrimgeour-colin-graham> and William Renwick, *Scrim: The Man with a Mike* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2011), blurb.

SOURCE A

[Scrimgeour was] a Methodist minister, whose Friendly Road sessions on private radio 1ZR in the 1930s made him one of the most popular men in the country. In the time of depression he brought hope and comfort to many and in so doing attracted thousands to any gathering he attended. Worried about his influence regarding its commercial radio broadcasting policy, the Coalition government of the day jammed his planned radio session just before the 1935 election. Labour was swept into power and Scrimgeour's years of agitation for recognition of commercial broadcasting came to fruition when he was made head of the commercial service in 1936. ...

It's probably hard for those who have always known television to realise just how important radio was when Scrimgeour hit the airwaves and became a household name. ... My dear friend and mentor, Phillida Dive, now 92, ... can attest to the power of radio in the lives of New Zealanders in those early years.

"We lived by listening to radio, it was extremely important," she says. "It was the beginning of stars ... like Uncle Scrim." While she didn't listen much to Scrimgeour, she says she was well aware of what a controversial figure he was, and how skilled he was at holding his radio audience.

My father, a conservative farmer from Waitoa in the Piako, ... had no truck with him, scorning his socialist principles, and wouldn't have been caught dead listening to his programme.

Dr Allison Oosterman, 'Everybody's uncle' (Book review of *Scrim: The Man with a Mike*, by William Renwick), in *Pacific Journalism Review*, 18 (1), 2012, pp. 225–226.

SOURCE B

Then, on Sunday 24 November 1935, 'Uncle Scrim', who broadcast a programme called the 'Friendly Road', was drowned out by high-frequency jamming equipment just as he was about to urge his listeners to vote Labour. Labour supporters suspected instructions had gone to Station 1ZB from ministers. Coates issued a denial, but it was later revealed that the Postmaster General, Adam Hamilton, had been responsible. In the superheated last days of the campaign the issue whirled about but influenced few voters, most of whose minds were already made up.

Michael Bassett and Michael King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song: A Life of Peter Fraser* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 136.

SOURCE C

As the 1935 election drew near, the Government feared that people might be told how to vote from those stations. On the evening of 25 November, 1935 "Friendly Road" listeners were certainly told how to vote, but in a very novel way – by the Government itself. On that evening, as the campaign was reaching its peak, 1ZB was very efficiently 'jammed'. The effect of the 'jamming' was quite the opposite of the Government's intentions. Speaking in the debate on the annual report of the Broadcasting Board in 1936, Mr S. G. Smith, by then Opposition Member for New Plymouth, stated:

"All the talk about jamming of [radio] stations was good political propaganda, and the talk in Auckland won for the honourable Gentlemen opposite their huge majority." ...

Even if no definite instructions were given by the Government for the jamming of the station, it seems a very high-handed action on the part of Post Office officials to bring an oscillator up to Auckland and then use such an instrument for the jamming of a station without definite Ministerial instructions.

Whatever way it is looked at, it was very unwise from the then-Government's point of view. It paved the way for the complete Government control of broadcasting, with full Ministerial responsibility, Mr Scrimgeour himself taking over the directorship of the commercial stations.

George Fraser, *Ungrateful People* (Auckland: The Pelorus Press, 1952), p. 23.

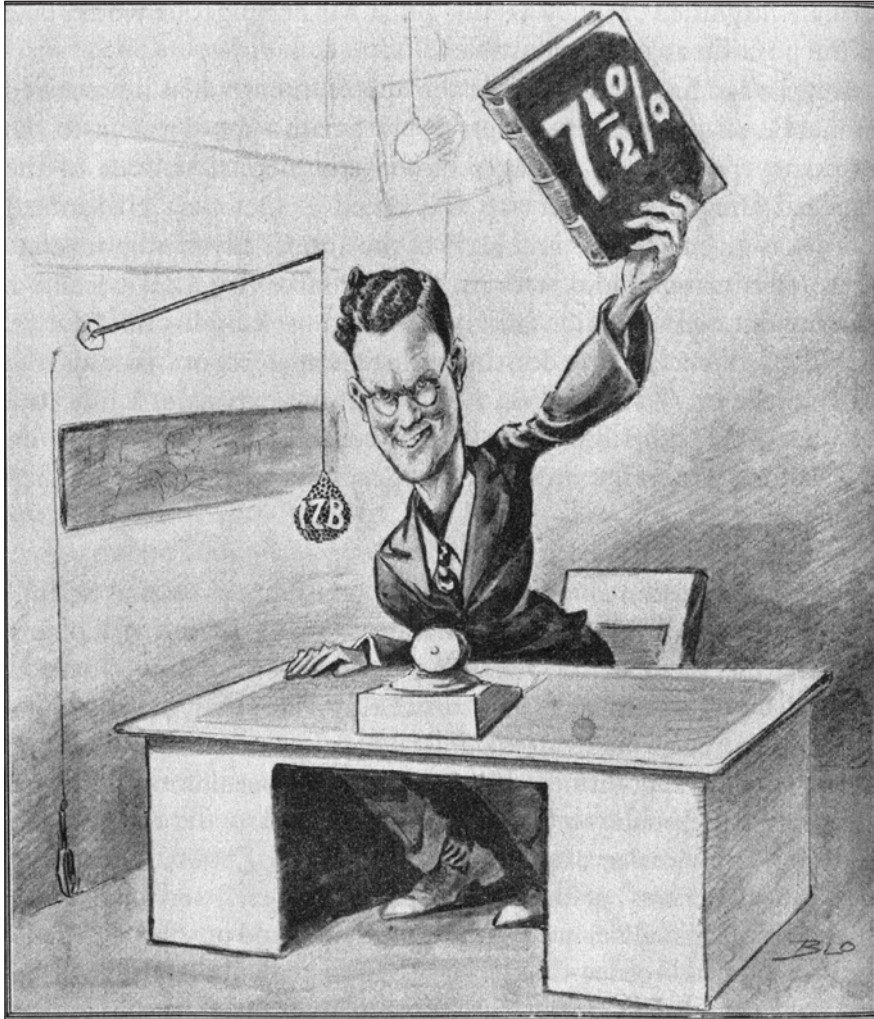
SOURCE D

During the campaign Michael Savage, the new Prime Minister, had promised that the 'B stations will live'. The A stations were already a government responsibility under the broadcasting board. The new Government reorganised them into the National Broadcasting Service under a minister. ...

Later Savage announced that the B stations would indeed live – as a government commercial service. Uncle Scrim became the first director of the New Zealand Commercial Broadcasting Service at a salary of 7½% of the advertising revenue. ... Eventually Scrimgeour's salary was tied to a similar amount when complaints were made in Parliament that his annual income could reach ... £8000 a year. Scrim energetically introduced commercial radio to New Zealand. He transformed the range and sound of broadcasting with a lively mixture of American and Australian ideas and his own rich innovation.

Hamish Keith, *New Zealand Yesterdays: A Social History of New Zealand in the 20th Century* (Auckland: Reader's Digest Books, 1984), p. 158.

SOURCE E



William Blomfield, 'The Stranger of 1ZB', *New Zealand Observer*, 7 December 1936, Alexander Turnbull Library Cartoon Collection N-P 1623-1, reproduced in William Renwick, *Scrim: The Man with a Mike* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2011), p. 112.

SOURCE F

Sometimes history, even the relatively recent such as the Great Depression, reads like a foreign country or some kind of parallel universe. Broadcaster Colin Scrimgeour is a standard figure in any history of 1930s New Zealand, if only for the curious event of how one of his “Man in the Street” broadcasts was jammed. Whether it was the coalition government of Gordon Coates that ordered the jamming has never been clear.

In *Scrim: The Man with a Mike*, teacher and civil servant William Renwick only lightly touches on the actual jamming, but sets it in context of the life of a bewildering man, a Methodist minister with a giant opinion of himself. He was a striking pioneer in commercial radio in Auckland and it is here that the Scrim story enters an almost Alice in Wonderland world. Scrim broadcasts were actively censored and monitored by prime ministers, including his saintly hero, Michael Joseph Savage.

Renwick makes a good fist of working his way through the way in which Scrim, heavily pro-Labour and aligned with rebel MP John A. Lee, constantly chafed at controls. Renwick is no devotee of Scrim, and he hints that he suffered more than just an average media ego – that there was a megalomania verging on the sheer lunatic at times.

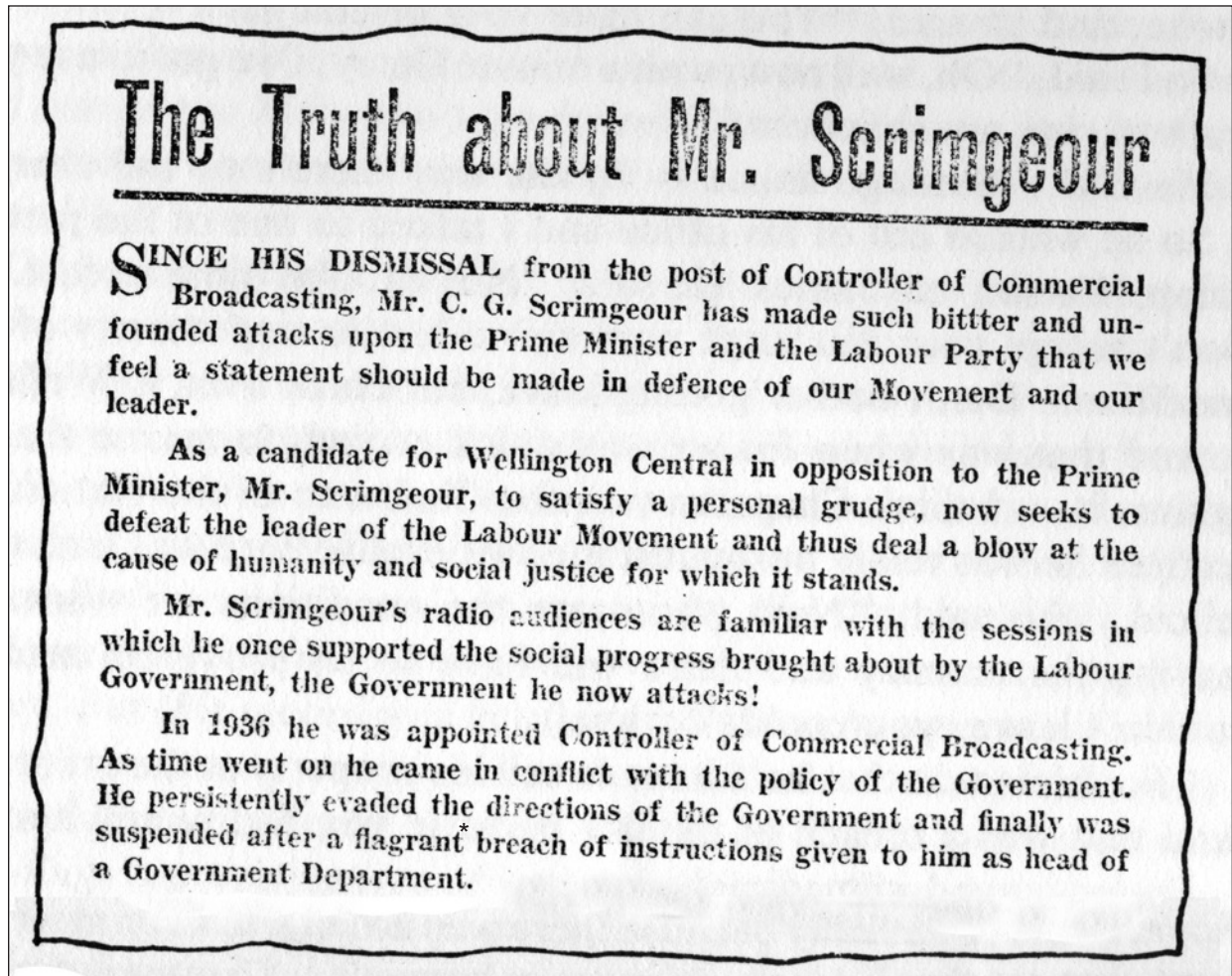
“A career in broadcasting which began with such great promise came to an untimely end through his domineering personality,” he writes. Much of it plays in Auckland, but a city so very unlike the one we now know. Scrimgeour was huge in his day – his call to action on various political issues could fill the city’s biggest halls. But when he was gone, he was very quickly forgotten, except by those closest to controversies.

One of the problems with political high-fliers is that they exist and are noted in a very narrow time-frame, unless they do something exceptional. Scrim was an undoubtedly significant figure in New Zealand’s 20th century political history.

Michael Field, ‘Giant of an NZ we no longer know’, (Book review of *Scrim: The Man with a Mike*, by William Renwick), *Sunday Star Times*, 6 November 2011. <http://www.stuff.co.nz/sunday-star-times/features/5910404/Giant-of-an-NZ-we-no-longer-know>

SOURCE G

A pamphlet written by Scrimgeour's political enemies and distributed in the 1943 election when he stood against the Prime Minister, Peter Fraser.



* *Flagrant* clear, obvious

C. G. Scrimgeour, John A. Lee, Tony Simpson, *The Scrim-Lee Papers: C. G. Scrimgeour and John A. Lee Remember the Crisis Years 1930-1940* (Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1976), p. 123.

SOURCE H

In 1944 a prime minister sought to have my father killed because he was the most loved man in New Zealand. The prime minister was Peter Fraser. My father was Colin Scrimgeour, Uncle Scrim, who died on January 16, 1987, at the age of 83. ...

Outsiders always valued him more highly than did the New Zealand Establishment. In the 1930s he created the art and structure of broadcasting in New Zealand. Ordinary people gathered in front of neighbours' radios to hear his broadcasts. At his public meetings, bigger audiences were turned away from town halls than the town halls could seat. Seven thousand waited outside one. So the establishment saw him as dangerous. In 1935 the United-Reform Government jammed his regular broadcast before the elections. They thought he would swing the result to Labour. Labour won. Then, from 1940 to 1944, the Labour Government in turn censored, banned, and fired Scrim to keep him off the air.

In 1943 they called him up for military service and tried to railroad him into the front line, though he was 40 and had a damaged heart. In 1944 they effectively exiled him with the condition that he not broadcast in New Zealand for 25 years: until 1969. In that year the NZBC still found it impolitic to let the public hear him.

A voice so ardently silenced by governments of both parties is worth listening to, especially when the voice was said to speak for the ordinary people of New Zealand.

Gary Scrimgeour, 'When Scrim Spoke', *NZ Listener*, 28 February 1987, pp. 16–17.

SOURCE I

LEE: But with Savage dead and me gone there weren't any more favours from or for the Labour Party. Fraser and Nash knew that they only had to wait for their chance.

SCRIM: They got it by calling me up into the Armed Forces. I was within one month of being over age, and they called me up and sent me for a medical. I went and had a medical and was turned down straight away as unfit. I had at that time a leaky valve in my heart, and the two doctors who examined me just simply got me to do a few bends or something and they listened to my heart and they said, "Right, we don't want you."

Len Isitt was an old friend of mine – he was the fellow who had passed me for my flying licence years and years before. So I went up and saw him, he was then Chief of Air staff, and I said, "I want a job. I want to go into the Air Force."

"Oh God!" he said. "You and what else will hit me? ... We'll train you. I think I'd better swear you in here now," and he got the sergeant from his own office with a Bible in his hand and said, "Swear in AC2¹ Scrimgeour," and I was sworn in and walked out of his office as an AC2.

Now Fraser heard about this, because Fraser had planned that I was leaving in the 10th Reinforcements (by the way he had jacked up all the doctors because he was the Minister of Health as well) and when my grading was re-made I was Grade I². But it was all right, it didn't worry me. As soon as ever I went to the Air Force; they had their own examination and they said, "No, you're not fit."

So Fraser heard about this and he rang Isitt from his Prime Minister's office and said, "We don't want Scrimgeour in the Air Force at all." Len Isitt was a pretty tough kind of a cookie and he said, "Well I'm afraid that you can't do anything about it, and neither can we. He's been sworn in."

But Fraser said, "Get him out."

They couldn't do anything about it, but by God they gave me hell. Every time I was moved I got a medical (I was Grade II³ you see, and that put you out of active service); every time that grading got to Air Department I was ordered for a specialist examination, usually with one of Fraser's friends, and I got Grade 1. So, I'm all right. Off with the 10th Reinforcements.

¹ AC2 Aircraftman, second class

² Grade I Classed as medically fit for active service

³ Grade II Classed as medically unfit for active service

C. G. Scrimgeour, John A. Lee, Tony Simpson, *The Scrim-Lee Papers: C. G. Scrimgeour and John A. Lee Remember the Crisis Years 1930–1940* (Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1976), pp. 119 and 121.

SOURCE J



ON THE FRIENDLY ROAD

New Zealand's First Great National Talkie—

Featuring **UNCLE SCRIM**

A NEW ZEALAND FILM GUILD Production

(Approved for Universal Exhibition)

"BRING THE KIDDIES." A SHOW FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY.

AUCKLAND HERALD PRAISES FILM

"Those who may be dubious about the quality of 'ON THE FRIENDLY ROAD,' the talking picture released by the New Zealand Film Guild, simply because it has been made locally, may set their fears at rest, for the film reaches a surprisingly high standard in entertainment value. It is well acted and produced and is noted for the excellence of its photography. There is drama, action and an immense amount of sparkling comedy all woven in a story that undoubtedly holds the attention . . . the packed theatre that witnessed the premiere gave the picture a remarkable ovation."

—Auckland Herald, 29/8/36.

"ON THE FRIENDLY ROAD" COMMENCES SCREENING AT THE

NEW PLYMOUTH OPERA HOUSE

SATURDAY NEXT — OCTOBER 10, 1936.
SATURDAY NEXT — OCTOBER 10, 1936.

Sessions at 10.30 a.m. — 2 p.m. — 4.45 p.m. — 8 p.m.

BOX PLANS AT COLLIER'S. NO BOOKING FEE!

MANAGERIAL: Telephone reserves will be accepted at Collier's (Phone 243) from patrons living outside the Borough of New Plymouth's Boundary.

C. G. Scrimgeour, John A. Lee, Tony Simpson, *The Scrim-Lee Papers: C. G. Scrimgeour and John A. Lee Remember the Crisis Years 1930–1940* (Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1976), p. 70.

