

## **Policy Launch Speech: William Hughes, Prime Minister (NAT)**

**Lyrie Theartre, Bendigo, 27 March 1917**

“I did not anticipate when I last addressed the citizens of Bendigo in this place that I should within a few weeks stand before them as the head of Government appealing to the people of the Commonwealth, and as candidate for the suffrages of the electors of Bendigo. Much has indeed happened in the interval. The Government which I then had the honor to lead has disappeared, and a new one, composed of men of different parties, but united on the war, and all that is necessary to achieve victory, has taken its place. Circumstances made such a change necessary. Since I last stood here, urging you and all my fellow citizens to lay aside their difference in order that Australia might more efficiently do her part in this great war, abundant proof has been offered to all, save the willfully blind that there is amongst us a section upon whose ears such appeals fall like seed upon stony ground. (Hear, hear.)

The Government has appealed to the people of Australia because it found that in the face of the attitude of the caucus party effective government was impossible. As it declined to retain office unless it could do that which our present circumstances imperatively demand, there remained only the course which we have taken. None other was indeed possible. The use which the caucus party made of its majority in the Senate thwarted all attempts to carry on the government of the country. When asked by the late Government, comprised wholly of Labor men to grant such supply as would enable members to take part in a recruiting campaign, they point blank refused. They openly declared that the Government should not be allowed to go into recess; they boasted that by the use of the majority in the Senate, they would prevent me going to the Imperial War Conference to represent Australia. It is with great reluctance that the Government has taken this step of appealing to the electors. But the action of the Caucus party has, unhappily, made any other impossible.

The Government proposed to extend the life of Parliament, so that Australia should be represented at the Imperial War Conference, at which representatives from every part of the Empire are now gathered. The Prime Minister of every one of the self-governing Dominions had been invited to take part in the deliberations of the Imperial War Cabinet to discuss the conduct of the war, in terms of peace, the future of the Pacific, and other great questions of absolutely vital importance to the welfare of the Commonwealth and of the Empire. What the British Government has created is in effect a real Empire War Council, in which, for the first time in our history, the voices of the self-governing Dominions can be heard. The other Dominions have all sent their representatives, their voices will be heard. The voice of Australia, this country whose sons have dyed the rocks and sand of Gallipoli and the great battle field of France, with the hearts blood, will be silent. What a humiliation to every loyal Australian this is. What will our soldiers, who have endured, fought, bled and sacrificed all things in order that the honor of Australia might be upheld – that victory might be achieved, say, when they learn that

their country is not to share in these vitally important deliberations? What do you, the electors say? What can any loyal Australia say of a party calling itself Australia, who thus deliberately inflicts this humiliation and injury upon Australia?

[An Interjector: Shame upon them. (Cheers)] The Government has appealed to the electors to elect a Parliament that represents and can give effect to the desires of the Australian people to do their duty by the Empire. And I firmly believe that such a Parliament will be elected by the people. (Hear, hear.)

At this election the people have to decide by whom they will be governed; under what banner they will stand; what policy they desire. The two parties seeking the suffrages of the people are as far as under as night from day on matters vital to the welfare of the country. Their ideals, their outlook, their objective, are distinct. The party that I have the honour to lead stands openly and frankly for the Empire. (Hear, hear.) We believe in the British Empire because it stands for liberty, because it has given us all that we have; because it has protected us all our lives, because it now protects us; because we know that without its protection in this war, we should long ago have become a German colony; that our lot would have been that of Belgium. (Hear, hear.)

We are for the Empire, because the Empire is at once our sword and our shield. It is the greatest guarantee of the world's peace, of true civilisation. (Hear, hear.) We are for the Empire because we are true to Australia, to liberty, to ourselves. And because of this, we do not now ask whether a man is Labor or Liberal, but only whether he is an Australian prepared to put Australia first and sweep all sectional interests aside. (Hear, hear.) What of our opponents? I shall not insult the intelligence of the electors by dwelling upon that which is obvious to all who are not willfully blind. It is, I say unfortunately only too true that many of those who are opposed to us do not share these views. Some are violently hostile to Britain, sneering at the Empire and all that it stands for; some their vision clouded by gross misrepresentations and lies, think it possible to be loyal to Australia yet indifferent, if not hostile, to the fate of the Empire.

The party, then which opposed us is made up for the most part of men either hostile to or lukewarm on the war, indifferent to the Empire, or openly opposed to it; men clamouring for premature peace, men who forget that their first duty is to Australia, who put other interests before that of their country. And this party is absolutely controlled by men who are not seeking the suffrages of the people, by secret executives of persons not responsible to the electors. And these men, who really are the Caucus party, since they control it, are almost without exception against the Empire in favour of premature peace, caring for nothing but their own selfish and narrow interests. They have no constructive policy upon which they can stand, for they are not masters of their own actions; they are indeed, incapable of carrying any such policy into effect. They appeal to all that is narrow, mean and selfish, they come to destroy, not to build up; they preach a gospel of discord between all classes and sections; they chant a hymn of hate against myself. Sir, let us be perfectly frank on the matter. Between all these and us there is a great gulf fixed. (Hear, hear.) If the people want to be governed by such men, let them declare it; but at least they shall not do so without knowing what it is these men stand for. We place the war first, and everything else after. (Hear, hear.) We believe that it is not only the duty of Australia to stand by the Empire "to the last man and the last shilling" if need be, but that in no other way is it possible for Australia to be saved. (Hear, hear.)

Since, I last spoke to you events have moved with giant strides. I said then, and I repeat now, in plain words, that we have come to the crises in this great world-war; to the point when both combatants are girding their lions for the last, the decisive round. Upon the issue Australia's fortunes literally hang. (Hear, hear.). Since I spoke to you on this platform there has been a retirement by the Germans on the western front. I do not wish to underestimate its value. But we should not delude ourselves into believing it to be other than what it is a strategic retirement, dictated by military reasons. The fact is that the two opposing forces are preparing for the greatest battle ever seen on this earth; they are maneuvering for position, strengthening the weak links in the chain of their forces, getting ready for the supreme hour of trial. The submarine menace is more deadly than ever. We have come to the crisis in this war. (Hear, hear.)

The need for men has not lessened; the need for Australia playing her part as becomes a nation of free people is not affected by recent events. (Hear, hear.). Happily the casualties suffered by the Australian divisions during the winter months have been extremely light, not more indeed, than 20 per cent of what was anticipated, so that we are for the time being in a much better position, so far as men are concerned, than was contemplated. Yet if this war continues for many months the need for men will be acute. The people of Australia have decided that they will not resort to compulsion to fill the ranks of the Australian divisions at the front. The Government accepts the verdict of the people as given on 28<sup>th</sup> October last. It will not enforce or attempt to enforce conscription, either by regulation or statute during the life of the forthcoming Parliament. If, however, national safety demands it, the question will again be referred to the people. (Loud and enthusiastic cheers.)

That is the policy of the Government on this question. It is clear and definite. The Government accepts the verdict of the electors on 28<sup>th</sup> October, and appeals to the patriotism of the people to uphold the honor of Australia, by maintaining the Australian divisions at their full fighting strength by voluntary enlistment. It appeals to every loyal Australian, not to let the supreme sacrifice made by the thousands of young Australian lads who have offered up their lives on the altar of their country be in vain. Australians, cast out from all your minds all things that stand between you and the defence of your country, of your liberties, and follow the glorious example of the men of Gallipoli, of Pozieres and Bapaume. (Cheers.)

I have said that this Government is composed of men of diverse party crowds, who have united to win the war. In order that the electors of Australia may understand clearly, the position in which the members of the Labor Party who think with me stand, it is necessary to recall the circumstances in which the 1914 election was fought. Let us first then go back to the genesis of the late Parliament, which sprang into being amidst the very flames of conflict. It was a war Parliament. Mr. Fisher, the then leader of the party, speaking at Colac, pledged Australia's "last man and last shilling" in this great struggle. These words, which have become historic, are surely sufficiently sweeping; but the more deliberate terminology of the Labor manifesto, if possible, pledges the Labor party and every member of it still more definitely to a policy running the gamut of all things necessary to achieve victory. It said:- Our interests and our very existence are bound up with those of the Empire. In time of war, half measures are worse than none. If returned with a majority, we shall peruse with the utmost vigor and determination every course

necessary for the defence of the Commonwealth and the Empire in any and every contingency.

Regarding, as we do, such a policy as the first duty of Government at this juncture, the electors may give their support to the Labor party with the utmost confidence. And this we say, further that whatever be the verdict of the people, we shall not waver from the position taken up by Mr. Fisher on behalf of our party, viz, that “In this hour of peril there are no parties, so far as the defence of the Commonwealth and Empire are concerned, and that the Opposition will co-operate with the Government and stand behind them as one man”. The position then is that if the electors give us a majority we shall expect Mr. Cook and his supporters to stand behind us. On the other hand, if Mr. Cook has a majority, we shall stand behind him in all things necessary for the defence of the Commonwealth and the Empire.

Who can read these words and doubt that the Labor party was elected to prosecute the war with every ounce of energy, sparing neither men nor money? This, then, was the contract made by the Labor party in 1914 with the electors. What is its attitude towards the war to-day? Who can read that spineless, emasculated thing issued yesterday, bombastically paraded as the manifesto of the Labor party and doubt that the attitude of the caucus party towards the war is at best - [An Interjector: Very weak.] Lukewarm. (Cheers) To them this life and death struggle for Empire and liberty is a mere side issue.

Now let us come to a review of the circumstances responsible for the position in August last. Upon Mr. Fisher's acceptance of the High Commissionership in September, 1915, I was unanimously elected leader of the Labor party. After my return from Britain I found that recruiting had fallen off very seriously – we were not getting one half the necessary quota – while the Empire's demand for men had greatly increased. The position in which the Empire and Aliens then stood was grave in the extreme. The British Army Council took the step unprecedented in the history of Australia of requesting the Government to maintain the five divisions at their full strength. There had been desperate fighting at Pozieres, and the losses amongst the Australian forces were very heavy, there being nearly 20,000 casualties for September 1910. The outlook was black, the need for men most acute. Compulsory service inside the Commonwealth had long been the law. It was one of the main planks of the Labor platform. The referendum is also a plank, perhaps the basic one, of that platform. Those of us who put the war first, who stood by the pledge given to the electors in Mr. Fisher's manifesto, saw but one way by which their country and their party could be saved.

As Labor men and democrats we submitted the question of compulsory overseas service to the electors. For this we have been expelled, denounced as traitors, vilified, and covered with venomous and cowardly abuse. What is our offence, our crime? Why were we expelled? Not because we had broken any pledge made to the party or to the electors; not because we had violated any plank of the platform; nor for anything we said during the conscription campaign; not for the so-called regulation at the referendum! All these things are after-thoughts, excuses; they happened after our expulsion! We are expelled because we did not break the pledge that Labor party gave to the electors on 5<sup>th</sup> September, 1914, that it would pursue with the utmost vigor and determination every course necessary for the defence of the Commonwealth and the Empire in any and every contingency”. (Hear, hear.). When Australia, the Empire and liberty were threatened

with destruction, we acted as Australians who stood loyally by the Empire, as lovers of liberty, prepared to sacrifice all things for country and liberty.

I was expelled because I chose to tread the narrow path of duty. I could, I say, have been the unchallengeable leader of a great party; holding an overwhelming majority in both Houses and for years have remained so. I could have prolonged the life of the Parliament without any difficulty. The members of the Labor party were most anxious that this should be done, and had I remained with them they would have been its most enthusiastic advocates. Powers, ease, ensured position, were before me. I had but to hold my tongue, to temporise, to sandbag my conscience, to obey the junta as the majority of the party have done, and for me all would have been well. As you know, I did not do this. (Hear, hear.). I could not do it. I should have despised myself if I had sold my country and the Empire for a mess of pottage (Hear, hear.).

I have been all my life an advocate of the cause of Labor. I invite all those who venomously denounce me to show their record of things done for Labor and for Australia generally, and let the people match them with mine. I invite the electors to contrast the records of the Labor men who stand with me in Federal and State spheres, such men as Spence, J. C. Watson, Lamond, Pearce, Givens, Holman, Lynch, Vaughan, Thomas, Earle and others with those of our opponents. I and my friends believe in the cause of the people. We have served their cause all our lives.

We are working for it now, and I believe that the great mass of the people of Australia believe that the course we have taken, and intend to pursue to the end, is not only the right way to save the country and help the Empire, but also the right way to save democracy and the Labor movement. I am glad to say that every day, from all parts of Australia, abundant proofs that the people approve the course I have taken, and are prepared to support this Government, are coming too hand. And these are not confined to citizens outside industrial unionism, but include very man of the most stalwart of the supporters of organised Labor. (Hear, hear.). Sir, I stand here to-night as the leader of all that is best in the Labor movement of Australia. The men who stand with me, whose names have been watchwords in the camp of Labor for years, have given their whole lives to the cause of Labor, and are comrades in this great fight by whose side any Labor man might be proud to stand. (Hear, hear.)

Let me say a word about the present Government, for whom I now speak. Its purpose is to do whatever is necessary to enable Australia to aid the Empire to win the war. It is a war Government. In this dark hour, when liberty and the British Empire was locked in death grips with Prussian military, despotism; when every Britisher, Frenchmen, Russian, Italian, Belgian, stand side by side in defence of country and liberty, we who yesterday were in the party camps of Labor and Liberalism, now forget all things save that we are Australians, and that Australia and all that we hold dear are in grave danger. But the caucus party stands solely aloof, as if the war had not changed all things, as if united action were not imperative. I do not stand here to apologise for the fact that men hitherto divided by political opinion have been drawn into intimate association by this war. Our attitude needs neither apology nor explanations. To any man in whose breast the spirit of patriotism is not dead; our attitude is the only one possible to free men at this juncture. (Hear, hear.)

You have been told – you will be told ad nauseum – by those who, in order to retain their seats, speak as the junta directs, that the interests of Labor are not safe in our hands, that the workers of Australia, in order to protect themselves, must support the caucus party; that the Commonwealth War Government is not to be trusted to look after the interests of the worker. As I shall deal later in the campaign at greater length with this point, I need only treat it here in a general way. First let us ask ourselves what precisely the caucus party means by this cry. They mean that a Government in where Liberals are included will destroy Labor legislation and those safeguards, which Labor has created to protect its interests transfer taxation from the shoulders of the men and place it upon those of the masses. They mean in short that the policy of the war Government will destroy the fruit of the policy of the Labor Government which preceded it.

First I say it is obviously a sham charge. All this talk about the dangers to be apprehended from the presence of Liberals in the present Government is palpably insincere. All they say about the present Government they said about the last, which was comprised wholly of Labor men. They announced me then; they denounce me now. During the conscription campaign men who were my followers, men who had beslobbered me but a few weeks before with fulsome adulation, covered me with abuse, charged me with having being bribed to bring in conscription, as now they charge me with having bribed others to serve my own purposes. That is the first answer to the charge that the present Government is not to be trusted to do justice to the workers.

The next is not less convincing. These very men who denounce the presence of Mr. Cook and his followers which I have the honor to lead were not only willing that he should form a Government to replace the Hughes Labor Government but approached him quietly and gave him positive assurance that if he did so they, these caucus champions of the workers, would support him and his Government. Yet now the very men who were prepared to support a Liberal Government with all Liberals in it are trying to persuade the workers that the present Government half of which is composed of Labor men – are not to be entrusted with power, as the interest of the masses are not said in their hands. What canting hypocritical humbug this is. That is the second answer to their charge. It is in itself overwhelming.

But there is a third and it a final and conclusive. This Government does not come to destroy Labor legislation or, under cover of the war, take advantage of the workers. (Hear, hear.). It is a Government formed to deal with the war, to win the war. It is non-party not merely in name, but in very deed. And, so I say it will not touch one stone in the temple of labor legislation. (Hear, hear.). It will not touch the maternity pensions, old age pensions, or any other acts brought in by Labor Government. It accepts things as it finds them. It comes not to destroy, but to build up; not to sow seeds of discord between the classes by taking advantage of this great calamity to serve a party purpose, but to bring the nation into line. The Liberals have and retain their own opinions on some of the parts of the policy of Labor, the Labor men the policy of Liberals, but both say, as true Australia; this is no time to fight amongst ourselves. (Hear, hear.).

What this Government and this united party say is, “Let us join hands and as Australians, do our duty as one man against the enemy of our country and the Empire”. Every worker in Australia, every unionist who is loyal to Australia and the Empire can vote for the

party for whom I speak with the positive assurance that what Labor legislation has gained for them will be left inviolate, and that their interests will be safeguarded. (Hear, hear.)

This brings me to another great principle for which this Government stands. I mean responsible government – government by persons elected by the people and directly responsible to the people. This principle is the very foundation of democratic government – (Hear, hear) – that is, rule by the majority; democracy cannot exist under any form of representative government without it. The present position of the majority; democracy cannot exist under any form of representative government without it. The present position of the caucus party is absolutely incompatible with responsible government, and is the very negation of democracy.

Under responsible government the men who govern the country are the men who are elected by the people. Under the caucus party's system of government, as laid down by the recent conference, the men who rule or would rule if they had a majority in the Parliament are not members of Parliament at all, not men elected by the people. You will be told that the Labor platform and the Labor party are the same as they always were. Nothing can be further from the truth. There is no more resemblance between the Caucus parties as it is to-day and the Labor party as it was than there is between slavery and freedom. Under things as they were, the selected candidate of the Labor party stood on a platform which he knew and accepted, and which the elector knew and could judge whether it suited them or not. This platform could not be altered during the life of the Parliament, either by Labor conference, executive or caucus.

But things are very different now. Then every Labor man was a man, not, as he is now, a marionette, whose strings were pulled by the executive, or a phonograph repeating the decision of the junta. Now the outside executives absolutely control every act, every word of the Labor members. The executives regard the member as a servant to be ordered about at will. And what an object and humiliating admission was that made by Senator Stewart last week in the Senate. Senator Stewart was amongst the most ardent of conscriptionists; in and out of season he advocated it. He believed in the principle, he believed it was absolutely vital, and that it would be applied; he supported me in the party room, yet he votes and works against it. Why? Because in his own words "he had to obey the junta."

I have spoken many times of the greatness of Australia our heritage. I have said that it is the greatest heritage that ever fell to the lot of free men. (Hear, hear.) That as we are amongst the most fortunate of all the nations on earth, we ought to strive to prove ourselves worthy of such a country. And that we can do in many ways, but by none more surely than by fighting for her. (Hear, hear.). It is not given to all of us to be able to fight at the front, but all can do something to help in this great life and death struggle, the rich by their wealth and the poor by their service and all by putting aside party and class differences, joining hands as citizens of this great free Australia of ours, whose destiny is now being determined on the battle fields of the old world. It is our duty to help the Empire in this struggle. (Hear, hear.).

It is indeed imperative to do so for only by helping the Empire can we save Australia. As I have said, there are many ways in which we can help the Empire, with men, with money, with our products. As to men, now then the people have decided against

compulsion, the call of duty of patriotism of Australia, of Empire, must reach the ears of all our young men. Let them go forth and strike a blow for the land that has bred them. Let them draw the sword in defence of those liberties with which this country has so richly endowed them.

Now let me turn to other means by which Australia can aid the Empire, This war is not, as other wars, merely between the armed forces of the belligerents, it is a war between nations. Every man and woman is, or ought to be a fighter, struggling for his or her life. Every resource of the Empire, the services of every man and woman able to do some useful work, are needed in order that we should be victorious. (Hear, hear.). Now the most effective means by which Australia can help the Empire, apart from sending men to fight, is to send from her great storehouse these metals for ammunitions and her products to feed and clothe the Imperial and Allied armies and the people of Britain. I have said this war is a war between nations, not merely between armies. The question of food supplies is absolutely vital. Upon an ample supply all depends. If Germany falls she will fall because she can no longer feed her people. Though her legions stand like a granite wall against the furious attack of the Allies, yet their valor will avail nothing unless the 120,000,000 people in two Central Empires can be fed.

And what is true of Germany is not less true of Britain. (Hear, hear.). Unless her 45,000,000 are fed from overseas, nothing can save her; though she pile ammunitions high, though the roar of her great guns burst the heavens, though the fury of her attacks break gaps in the ranks of the enemy, unless the 45,000,000 in Britain are fed, victory will glide from her marveled hands. The blockade of German by the British fleet, the submarine campaign by Germany, are daggers aimed at the very heart of Germany and Britain. Which shall strike first? That is the question. Upon the answer hangs our destiny, and that of the civilized world. (Hear, hear.) Australia's duty in this great crisis is obvious. We must make available in increasing quantities the products necessary to enable the Empire and its Allies to win the war. Freight is a vital factor, but over that we have no control. Over the food supplies, which will save the Empire if they can but be safely carried overseas, we have full control. Over the food supplies, which will save the Empire if they can but be safely carried overseas, we have full control. Let us then endeavour by organized efforts to increase our food and general products to help the Empire in the war and during the period of reconstruction which will follow on the heels of war, and at the same time develop the abundant resources of this our glorious heritage. (Hear, hear.)

Now, having stated what we must do, let me declare the policy of the Government on the matter. The Government of which I was a member dealt in drastic fashion with the agencies through which Germany controlled the base metal and other industries. At my suggestion it stepped in and organized freight, and threw all its weight behind the wheat pool scheme. Under the Wheat Board the farmer has received all that his wheat produced, less actual expenses of handling. The middleman has been eliminated, handling charges and commissions have been reduced to the minimum. Further, under this scheme all farmers, great and small, fare alike. The Wheat Board has now decided in favor of a farmers' representative on the board. Since the wheat pool came into existence we have sold 6,100,000 tons, that is, 228,000,000 bushels, of wheat at an advantage price

of 4/9 1-3 f.o.b. Of this, 2,014,000 tons have been actually sent oversea, and 3,185,000 tons sold, but not yet shipped.

The farmer has received for wheat sold and actually delivered to the buyer oversea and here 27,271,000; and for wheat sold but not delivered he has received an additional 13,825,000. the British Government, as is well known, has brought altogether 3,500,000 tons – that is 112,000,000 bushels – of the 1915-16 and 1916-17 wheat for 4/9 a bushel f.o.b. This transaction is easily the biggest wheat deal in the world. The greater part of this wheat has not yet been shipped. For this wheat the farmer has already received £14,000,000 and the balance will be paid as soon as the money is available from the British Government. Payment will not depend upon the shipment of wheat from Australia. It is not too much to say, in fact, that without the wheat pool the wheat-growing industry would have been almost ruined. The Government freight scheme, to the success of which the Commonwealth fleet of steamers contributed materially, enabled the Australian farmer, 12,000 miles distant from Britain, to get freight as cheap as the Argentine farmer, not one-half the distance!

The general effect of the wheat pool and the freight arrangement has been to greatly encourage wheat growing. The great difficulty under which the producer in Australia has always labored is to find an assured market at a remunerative price for his products. And this brings me to the point I wish to make. An assured market for the producer is absolutely essential if we wish to develop this country. Great quantities of food products are now, and are going to be for some time after the war, vital to the Empire. (Hear, hear.)

The Commonwealth, which seeks above all things to help the Empire, and at the same time to develop Australia, has decided upon a policy which will encourage the farmer to increase the acreage under cultivation, and it will apply this policy to all forms of primary and secondary industries. Dealing with wheat, it has, acting in conjunction with the wheat growing States, already guaranteed a minimum of 4/ a bushel f.o.b. for the next season's 1917-18 wheat crop. It now extends that guarantee to the 1918-19 crop. (Hear, hear.) Farmers, therefore, who have already received payment for the 1915-16 crop and portion of the 1916-17, and have the remainder guaranteed, can get to work straight away on new and old ground with the positive assurance that, come peace or war, slump in the market, scarcity of freight or what not, they are assured of at least 4/ a bushel f.o.b. for their wheat crops for 1917-18 and 1918-19 (Hear, hear.) This, I think, will put great heart into our farmers. They will get their land under cultivation, and many men, returned soldiers and others, will be encouraged to go on the land now that they know a certain and remunerative market is assured to them.

I want to tell the meat producers of Australia that the Government, recognizing the vital importance of the matter both from the point of view of feeding the empire and developing Australia, will take such action as will ensure that the channels and agencies through which Australian meat finds its way to the markets of the world, including refrigerated tonnage and selling agencies, are controlled in their interests, so that they too, will have an assured market as far as human effort can guarantee it.

As you know, scarcity of freights and the recently imposed prohibition of imports into Britain has seriously affected the producers of several of our primary products. The

oversea markets are thus wholly closed or seriously affected, and the Government, in order to protect the producer from loss and the consumer from exploitation, has adopted a policy of appointing boards to regulate prices and find markets. This is being done with hides and leather, tallow, hops, apples and dried fruits. On all these boards the producer will have direct representation. The Government will regulate prices in any industry where such action is necessary to protect the producer from loss and the consumer from exploitation.

One point of great importance in this connection may be emphasized before I pass on to other matters. I mean the effect of Australian resources on the great mass of the people. We have fixed the price of wheat sold for local consumption at 4/9 a bushel. This means a cheap loaf. By the policy of the Government that cheap loaf is ensured for the next three years. (Hear, hear.) We have fixed the price of sugar at 3 ½ d. per lb., and at the same time given the producer of sugar a much higher price than ever he received in his life. The prices of staple commodities in Australia to-day offer a striking contrast to those obtaining in Britain and elsewhere. Bread here is 6 ½ d. to 7d. a 4-lb loaf; in Britain it is 10d. a 4-lb. loaf. Sugar here is 3 ½ d per lb., in London it is 7d.

Let me turn for a moment to a matter of the utmost possible importance, but which I cannot deal with at length this evening. I mean the Government policy towards Australian industries in general. The secret of Germany's success in commerce and industry before the war, her tremendous strength during the war springs from organization upon a national basis. And we, too, must organize not only to win the war, but to retain the fruits of victory when won, and to enable us to deal with the great problems that will arise when war has ceased. (Hear, hear.) It is to this work of organisation and development of our national resources to win the war and to hold the fruits of victory, and to grapple with the problems that peace will bring in its train, that the Government's policy is directed.

Our attitude on the tariff as a means of encouraging industry has been already stated by me in the Ministerial statement recently made in the parliament. It is the intention of the Government to develop Australian production and industry, and to proceed with such amendments of the present tariff as may be necessary to attain this end. (Hear, hear.) While alteration of the present tariff cannot now be made, the Government is pledged to deal with the matter directly circumstances make it possible. (Hear, hear.) The Government will also push on with the policy of the late Administration, and seek the aid of science for the development of industry. Time will not enable me to deal this evening with what has been already done by the Bureau of Science and Industry, and how it can be utilized to help Australian industries. But I do not hesitate to declare that only by enlisting the aid of science can we hope to develop the great resources of Australia. (Hear, hear.)

It has been said many times that this war is not as other wars. And this is very true. It is certainly not less true that great as the task is that the war imposes upon the community, the aftermath of war will create problems most complex and difficult. Amongst these problems is the repatriation of our soldiers. We owe to those who have borne the brunt of battle more than the nation can ever adequately repay. (Hear, hear.) It is the intention of the Government, as far as is humanly possible, to see that the debt is paid in full. (Hear, hear.) The Government intends to apply itself vigorously to the task which lies before it.

The widows and dependants of those who have fallen will be provided for; the unemployable will be generously pensioned, and the maimed will be settled in occupations for which they are fitted. The Commonwealth Government undertakes the full responsibility for the welfare of the returned soldiers, and is now completing the machinery necessary to ensure it. It has agreed with the States upon a scheme of land settlement, and is now dealing with the various other phases of repatriation of the soldier. The Government scheme will provide for direct representation of the soldiers themselves, so that the returned men will have a voice in the working of the scheme, and the Government the benefit of their advice and co-operation. (Hear, hear.)

The financial obligations of the land settlement and general repatriation proposals to which the Commonwealth is committed, involve a considerable amount of money, which has been estimated at £32,000,000 of which £22,000,000 is required for land settlement, and £10,000,000 for other forms of repatriation. The Government proposes to raise the £22,000,000 by loans, and the remaining £10,000,000 by a tax upon incomes spread over a series of years. It hopes to ensure that close and intimate interest in the repatriation of the soldier, which is essential to the success of the scheme, by also appealing for voluntary contributions in money and kind. (Hear, hear.)

A word here on a matter of vital interest to Australia. We have a continent in which 100,000,000 of people could live in comfort. We have a population of barely 5,000,000. If we are to hold this great and rich country, we must people it with the right kind of men and women. The Government has already agreed with the States that the same facilities offered to the returned Australian soldiers for land settlement shall be given to the British soldiers the men who are fighting the battles of the empire are the kind of men we want in Australia. (Hear, hear.) The Government is anxious to cooperate with the States to ensure a steady stream of desirable immigrants after the war, in order that it may settle a virile population upon the lands of Australia.

This war, which has brought dreadful ruin and disaster to other lands, which has left poor Belgium a blackened and ruined waste, has passed us by unscathed. But, although happily we have escaped its awful horrors, yet the war has imposed upon us great burdens, which daily grow heavier. The taxation which the people have to pay has been considerably increased. We have already incurred debts for war purposes falling not far short of £130,000,000. To this of course, must be added other obligations as for example, those arising out of the repatriation of our soldiers. We are defraying a considerable portion of the extraordinary expenditure arising out of the war from revenue, and, as you know, have lately increased the rate of income tax by 25 per cent.

Wealth has its duties and its responsibilities in this great struggle as well as manhood, and I feel sure that no loyal Australian will complain because he is called upon to contribute his fair share of wealth towards helping the Commonwealth and the Empire to achieve decisive victory. It is only right that every man should contribute his fair share towards this war, and that no man should make a profit at his country's expense. The Government intends to proceed with the War-time Profits Bill. Every consideration will be given to new businesses, to exceptional industries and to individual cases where hardship would arise, but the principle that no man is entitled to make undue profits in war time is sound, equitable, and will be applied. Our circumstances compel a wise and

prudent economy in expenditure, and the Government will exercise the utmost care in this direction. (Hear, hear.)

The Government intends to follow the example of Great Britain in regard to the regulation of the importation of luxuries during war time. (Hear, hear.) Such a policy seems to be dictated both by common prudence and the circumstances in which we now find ourselves. (Hear, hear.) It is obviously on the face of it that to send money out of this country and out of the empire at a time when every atom of wealth is essential is a suicidal policy. While recognizing how intricate the ramifications of the proposal are and how carefully and closely each particular item must be dealt with, the Government intends to give effect to that policy, so that we may keep the wealth of the country within the country and the empire; make available for loan and other purposes money which otherwise would be dissipated in unnecessary expenditure, and at the same time encourage as far as humanly possible the industries of Australia, and increase the opportunities of employment for our own citizens.

It is obvious that in so complex a matter we must proceed with great care. To prohibit the importation of luxuries, and so give employment to ten people and at the same time throw 250 out of work, would be folly. The question is most difficult, but, having due regard to all its difficulties and complexities, the Government will endeavour to achieve the ends I have mentioned. (Hear, hear.)

I have come here to contest this electorate as a result of a general and widespread desire from electors of both political parties that I should do so. I have come to the people of Bendigo, and now seek their suffrages. If you do me the honor to elect me I will do my very uttermost to serve you and my country faithfully and well. The issue at this election are, beyond compare, the most important ever submitted to the people of this country. Upon the verdict of the electors will depend the future of Australia. (Hear, hear.) Sir, I have no doubt what that verdict will be. But we must not rest upon our oars. The forces that oppose us are powerful; their methods are insidious. They will work unceasingly; let us do likewise.

And let every elector remember that this is a fight not only for supremacy in one House, but in both. We must win the Senate, Electors of Australia, be true to yourselves, to Australia and to the Empire. The Government has appealed to the people. Its policy is before them. The issues are clear. The electors are to choose between us and the Caucus party.

We stand for the Empire, for prosecuting this war to decisive victory.

We are against premature peace; we are for that lasting peace which can only when the military despotism of Prussia is utterly destroyed.

We stand for responsible Government; that is, Government by the people through their elected representatives, as against Government by secret juntas of irresponsible persons working in the interest of cliques and sections.

We stand for the rule of law against anarchy.

We are for a fair deal for all men, irrespective of class.

We are for arbitration as against strikes.

We are for economy of public and private expenditure; we are for finding avenues of employment for our people by development of our national resources and by the encouragement of Australian industries.

We are for a fair deal for all men.

That is the policy on which this Government stands. I appeal to every loyal Australian, irrespective of party, to support it.” (Loud and prolonged cheers.)

Source: Compiled from The Age , March 28 1917, page 9 and The Sydney Morning Herald.