

energy, and the fitting of the Government machine to cope more effectively with the great economic and international problems with which we must urgently concern ourselves.

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PROFESSOR GILBERT MURRAY. O.M.

On January 18, the Prime Minister announced that the Commonwealth Government, on the advice of the Historic Memorials Committee, had recently purchased in London a portrait of Professor Gilbert Murray, O.M., painted in 1954 by his grandson, Mr. Lawrence Toynbee.

The portrait has now arrived in Canberra from London.

There are apparently very few portraits of the great scholar in existence and the Government considered that the National Collection of Art Treasures should include this portrait with those of other Australians distinguished in the fields of art, literature and science.

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WATERFRONT STRIKE

On January 23, the Prime Minister said:

"Cabinet has today considered the waterfront strike which began last night. It has had before it a careful and documented statement of the various negotiations and steps which have recently occurred, including the negotiation between the parties and the proceedings before the Arbitration Court. The urgent fact is that a strike is on and that, with certain exceptions, it has brought about a cessation of work on the waterfront at a time when the vital interests of Australia can be and are most vitally affected by it.

"As a Government, we are not the judges of the merits. We have at all times strongly maintained our belief that not only in the interests of the parties but in those of the public at large, which are of paramount importance, wages and industrial conditions where the parties do not agree should be dealt with by the industrial tribunals.

"In this particular matter, waterside workers claim that their pay should be increased; shipowners claim that there are restrictive practices on the waterfront which should be abolished if the costs of transportation (so important an element in costs generally) are to be kept at a level which will enable trade to go on, ensure to the public the lowest possible level of transport cost, and facilitate the prompt and profitable conduct of export trade for Australia as a whole.

"It will be quite clear to hundreds of thousands of employees in other industries that a disastrous waterfront strike will affect their employment. Indeed, if it goes on for even a few weeks it will inevitably produce mass unemployment in other industries. It is, therefore, my duty to point out to the public generally and to those concerned in the dispute in particular three things:

1. Whatever may be the final determination, the shipowners have in fact made an offer of a wage increase and have asked for the elimination of restrictive and, therefore, wasteful practices:

2. The fact that these practices lend themselves to impartial adjudication is conclusively established by the fact that they are not common to all ports; some at least of them do not exist in some ports but are practised in others.
3. The statement made by Mr. Justice Ashburner on Saturday shows that the shipowners were prepared to submit the matters in issue to arbitration but that this offer was rejected by the Federation.

"If this dispute is to continue its character as a conflict between arbitration and direct action, the Government will quite plainly find itself involved in the struggle and will require to take whatever steps are within its power to uphold the principle of arbitration.

"But before any final consideration can be given to the conduct of such a struggle, it is, I think, proper that I should, on behalf of the Government, point out something which may easily be overlooked under the present circumstances. The strike on the waterfront will have evil consequences for the Australian economy and therefore for all the people of Australia, employers or employed. If it is prolonged, those consequences can be disastrous for our balance of trade and for our overseas reserves.

"Such a prolonged strike, particularly at a time like this when we are in the flush export season, can stop wool sales, can have a depressing effect upon future wool prices; can grievously injure our farm product exports and internal trade; it can inflict great damage on the sugar industry, be ruinous for the fruit industry in a State like Tasmania, can expose us to great risks of a loss of markets for wheat, can, by impairing steel supplies, strike a deadly blow at the building and construction industries, including light engineering and motor body building. It can by transferring interstate traffic from ships to rail and road impose intolerable burdens upon these means of internal traffic. I do not need to add to these examples. The truth is that there will be few industries in Australia unaffected.

"It will be clear to all Australians that in a strike of this magnitude, the consequences and destructive power are out of proportion to any gains that can possibly accrue to waterside workers when the strike ends as it inevitably will. The damage to the Australian people will be many, many times greater than any benefit which waterside workers may fondly imagine they will secure by their denial of arbitration.

"As the leader of a democratic government, I do not feel, nor do my colleagues, that punitive action should have first priority. On the contrary, believing as we do in the good sense and responsibility of the Australians directly or indirectly concerned in this dispute, we believe and expect that a simple statement of the material facts will restore sanity of judgment, lead to the termination of this utterly useless dispute and bring everybody back to the traditional and sensible Australian view that where there are differences of opinion upon industrial matters, an independent judgment should be applied to them with all speed and the results of that judgment respected and obeyed.

"There are many things that could be said and that can be done. But I do not propose to say or do anything at this stage which will impede the settlement of this matter or prevent the characteristic good sense of the Australian people from having its prompt and inevitable effect. Whatever the individual desires of any man or group may be, the interests of Australia must be paramount."