Edward Millen

Edward Davis Millen (7 November 1860 ? 14 September 1923) was an Australian journalist and politician who served as the first Minister for Repatriation .

Millen emigrated to Australia from England around 1880 and established himself as a journalist , subsequently serving in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly from 1894 to 1898 , during which time he fiercely opposed the proposed Federation despite supporting the principle . He was a member of the New South Wales Legislative Council from 1899 until his election to the Australian Senate as a Free Trader from New South Wales at the first federal election in 1901 . Millen led the conservative parties in the Senate from 1907 until shortly before his death in 1923 .

He served as Vice @-@ President of the Executive Council (1909 ? 10) and Minister for Defence (1913 ? 14) in two short @-@ lived Liberal governments before his appointment as the first Minister for Repatriation in 1917 . He organised the new department and co @-@ ordinated Australia 's repatriation effort , and was briefly acting Prime Minister in 1919 , when he settled a seamen 's strike . Millen resigned from the ministry in February 1923 and died later that year , his illness attributed to his heavy workload in the post @-@ war years .

Early life

Millen was born in Deal , Kent in 1860 to John Bullock Millen , who was a pilot of the Cinque Ports , and Charlotte (née Davis) . He migrated to New South Wales in 1880 , having been educated in England and employed in the marine insurance business . On 19 February 1883 he married Constance Evelyn Flanagan at Bourke ; they settled as graziers in Brewarrina . Millen , who had worked as a journalist in Bourke and Walgett and wrote for the Central Australian and Bourke Telegraph (of which he reputedly became part @-@ owner) , became editor of the Western Herald and Darling River Advocate around 1889 , part @-@ owning the business together with Philip Chapman until 1901 . During this period he also worked as a land agent , acquiring an office in O 'Connell Street in Sydney and a house in Burwood by 1902 .

Millen stood for the New South Wales Legislative Assembly as the Free Trade candidate for Bourke in 1891 , but was defeated ; he contested the seat again in 1894 and won . He became known as a strong advocate for land reform , urging changed pastoral conditions and suggesting additional government assistance to deal with Australia 's dry climate , particularly during the 1890s drought .

State politics

Millen was a foundation member of the New South Wales Australasian Federation League in 1893 , formed to campaign for the unification of the six Australian colonies into a single Commonwealth , and in 1896 was active at the Bathurst People 's Federation Council . His distrust of Edmund Barton 's leadership led to his defeat as a candidate for the Australian Federal Convention in 1897 . In the Legislative Assembly , he objected strenuously to the proposed nature of the Senate , calling equal representation for all states " objectionable and dangerous " , and claimed that the New South Wales conventional delegates were elected because of their proficiency at " political business " , absolving New South Wales of the obligation of endorsing their decisions . As a result , Millen opposed the 1898 Federation referendum , becoming a founding member of the Anti @-@ Convention Bill League in April .

At the 1898 election , Millen was defeated by nine votes by a National Federal candidate . Having overcome his opposition to Federation , he was appointed to the New South Wales Legislative Council on 8 April 1899 as one of Premier George Reid 's twelve appointments to guarantee the passage of legislation for the 1899 referendum . At the first federal election in March 1901 , Millen stood for the Senate as a Free Trade candidate and was elected as the second of six senators for New South Wales . He resigned his Legislative Council seat in May of that year .

Early Senate career

Millen was an early leader in the Senate , serving as deputy to Josiah Symon 's unofficial leadership of the Free Trade Senators in 1901 . He advocated against high tariffs and bounties , claiming that industries that could not withstand free trade were " not entitled to much consideration at [the Senate 's] hands " . He was also a vigorous supporter of the White Australia policy , advocating the cessation of Kanaka immigration and the gradual deportation of those who had already arrived in Queensland ; his opposition was based on a concern that " inferior labour would ... tend to degrade labour throughout the Commonwealth " , as well as concerns about racial purity .

Millen succeeded Symon as leader of the Free Traders in the Senate in 1907 , and following the Fusion with the Protectionists in 1909 became Leader of the Government in the Senate and Vice @-@ President of the Executive Council under Prime Minister Alfred Deakin ; he would lead the various conservative parties in the Senate continuously until his death . In 1913 , following Joseph Cook 's one @-@ seat victory in the election , Millen became Minister for Defence , a position he held at the outbreak of World War I. In April 1914 he refused Winston Churchill 's suggestion that Australia need not maintain a fleet in its own territorial waters , and expressed " the sharpest criticism of the British " in a memorandum tabled in the Senate . He continued to privately criticise Britain 's management of the war , but the Cook Government ultimately placed the navy under the control of the British Admiralty in August 1914 . He oversaw the initial recruitment of 20 @,@ 000 men for the Australian Imperial Force and initialised the defence proposals for the war , but following the Labor Party 's victory at the 1914 election he returned to leading the Opposition in the Senate , although he did become a member of the parliamentary war committee .

= = Minister for Repatriation = =

Following the 1916 Labor split over conscription , Millen was included in Billy Hughes 's Nationalist ministry in February 1917 , initially as Vice @-@ President of the Executive Council but by September as Australia 's first Minister for Repatriation , dealing largely with veterans ' affairs . Together with Major Nicholas Lockyer , the controller of repatriation , Millen had responsibility for the creation of a new governmental department . The many returned servicemen in the department 's staff , most of whom had little administrative experience , caused problems ; Charles Bean wrote in 1918 that soldiers had " a dread of Millen as a politician first , last and all the time " . Millen organised the passage of the War Service Homes Act 1918 ? 19 , which established the War Service Homes Commission , but the administration of the scheme by Commissioner J. T. Walker led to a series of parliamentary inquiries by the joint committee of public accounts . Walker 's appointment by Millen came into question , and the resulting investigation into the Commissioner 's accountability to the Minister and to Parliament has been described as " one of the fullest examinations of ... ministerial responsibility for the actions of an autonomous public corporation in the history of the Commonwealth Parliament " .

Millen introduced the Australian Soldiers Repatriation Bill , which provided for a paid repatriation commission and higher pensions for servicemen , into the Senate in March 1920 . In response to the bill , and vigorous lobbying of Hughes by the veterans ' movement , the bill faced difficulty in its passage and Senator Josiah Thomas successfully moved a resolution that a minister in one house might appear on the floor of the other . This bill would have allowed Millen to address the House of Representatives , where he was facing fierce criticism from the Country Party , although ultimately neither house acted on the resolution .

During Hughes 's absence in Europe in mid @-@ 1919 , the acting Prime Minister was the Treasurer , William Watt ; Millen served as acting Prime Minister when Watt fell ill during July . Millen and Watt brought a successful resolution to the seamen 's strike . In 1920 he was sent to Geneva as Australia 's delegate to the first meeting of the General Assembly of the League of Nations , where he secured mandated Pacific protectorates for Australia despite opposition from Japan . He returned to Australia in 1921 , having arranged for the funding of Australia 's debts and reorganised Australia House .

Millen 's heavy workload had begun to affect his health and he considered retirement , but he

ultimately decided to continue and was re @-@ elected to the Senate at the 1922 election . He retired from the ministry in February 1923 , and in March was granted leave of absence because of his deteriorating health . He died aged 63 from chronic nephritis on 14 September 1923 at Caulfield in Melbourne , survived by his wife and two daughters . Presbyterian services were held at Parliament House in Melbourne and St Stephen 's Church in Sydney , and Millen was given a state funeral . He is buried at Rookwood Cemetery .

= = Legacy = =

Millen experienced fierce criticism from both the press and parliament during his time as Minister for Repatriation , but he is remembered as an important figure in Australia 's war effort and subsequent recovery . He has been described as the " most significant " contributor to the development of repatriation in Australia , which he as inaugural minister largely defined . After his death , Billy Hughes described him as unequalled in Senate leadership , and George Pearce remembered him as " one of the ablest and most destructive critics the Federal Parliament ever had " .