

1926.



THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

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and on the table  
Senator J. B. Hayes*

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~~By Command~~

~~In return to Order~~

*G. S. Monahan*

Clerk of the Senate.

11<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1926

## INTERIM REPORT

FROM THE

JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

UPON THE

## COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT SHIPPING ACTIVITIES.

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REPORT OF THE HONORABLE SIR GRANVILLE DE LAYNE RYRIE, K.C.M.G., C.B., V.D., M.P., CHAIRMAN

# THORPE MINTON

## MEMBERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.

(Fifth Committee.)

(Appointed 22nd January, 1926.)

\*The Honorable Sir GRANVILLE DE LAYNE RYRIE, K.C.M.G., C.B., V.D., M.P., Chairman.

### Senate.

- † Senator HATFIELD SPENCER FOLL.
- † Senator JOHN BLYTH (HAYES, C.M.G.)
- † Senator WALTER KINGSMILL.
- † Senator CHARLES STEPHEN McHUGH.
- † Senator EDWARD NEEHAM.

### House of Representatives.

- \* CHARLES LYDIARD AUBREY ABBOTT, Esquire, M.P.
- † SYDNEY LANE GARDNER, Esquire, M.P.
- JOHN HENRY LISTER, Esquire, M.P.
- PARKER JOHN MOLONEY, Esquire, M.P.
- \*\* THOMAS PATTERSON, Esquire, M.P.
- JOHN HENRY PROWSE, Esquire, M. P.
- EDWARD CHARLES RILEY, Esquire, M.P.

\* Chairman from 2nd July, 1925. † Discharged from attendance, 30th June 1926. ‡ Appointed 1st July, 1926. § Vice-Chairman from 22nd January, 1926, to 20th June, 1926. Chairman from 19th June, 1926, to 30th June, 1926. ¶ Vice-Chairman from 2nd July, 1926. § Appointed 18th June, 1926. \*\* Chairman from 22nd January, 1926, to 18th June, 1926. Discharged from attendance, 18th June, 1926.

REPORT OF THE HONORABLE SIR GRANVILLE DE LAYNE RYRIE, K.C.M.G., C.B., V.D., M.P., CHAIRMAN

# INTERIM REPORT

FROM THE

## JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

ON THE

### COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT SHIPPING ACTIVITIES.

The Joint Committee of Public Accounts decided, under the powers conferred upon it by the *Committee of Public Accounts Act 1913* 1920, to conduct an investigation into the Commonwealth Government Shipping activities.

The Committee commenced its inquiry in May last, and has examined the members of the Australian Commonwealth Shipping Board at present in Australia, the principal officers of the Australian Commonwealth Line of Steamers, and other witnesses who have been able to give evidence concerning the working of the line, and the advantages or disadvantages which have resulted from its establishment. The Committee has yet to examine further witnesses, the principal of whom is Mr. H. B. G. Larkin, Chairman of the Australian Commonwealth Shipping Board, who has been associated with the Line since its inception originally as General Manager of the Commonwealth Government Line of Steamers. Mr. Larkin has been absent from Australia since March, 1925, but has advised the Committee, by cablegram, that he will arrive in Australia next month. There has also been placed before the Committee much detailed information relating to the financial side of the Commonwealth Government Shipping activities, but time does not permit of such information being adequately reviewed at this stage of the Committee's proceedings, and, moreover, the evidence of Mr. Larkin may have an important bearing on certain aspects of the financial position.

In view, however, of emphatic evidence placed before the Committee that, owing to the uncertainty which exists concerning the continuance of the Australian Commonwealth Line of Steamers, its business has been adversely affected, the Committee has deemed it desirable to submit to Parliament, prior to the approaching recess, this Interim Report.

To arrive at a decision, apart from the question of Government policy, as to whether the Commonwealth Government Line should be continued, there must be considered what benefits have accrued to the country by the establishment of the Line, and whether such benefits have outweighed any financial loss incurred as a result of its trading operations. The evidence so far placed before the Committee indicates that not only has the Commonwealth Line been directly responsible for actual reductions in freights, but that the presence of the Line has exerted a material restraining influence against proposed increases. Whilst it is difficult, in fact, almost impossible owing to the many factors to be considered, to indicate in figures the actual gain to Australia by such action, it appears to the Committee, from the evidence already heard, that the shippers and primary producers of Australia have derived much benefit from the establishment of the Commonwealth Line of Steamers. The Committee, therefore, recommends that, in the interests of Australia, the Line be continued. In making this interim recommendation, the Committee desires to emphasize the fact that it has not yet completed its investigations: so far as these have gone, however, they indicate the necessity for a review of the present system of financing the Line, and a drastic curtailment of the overhead expenses, including the London Office; but until Mr. Larkin has had an opportunity of expressing his views in evidence, the Committee does not consider it desirable to indicate the lines along which such re-organization should be effected.

*Granville Ryrie*  
GRANVILLE RYRIE,  
Chairman.

Office of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts,  
Federal Parliament House, Melbourne,  
10th August, 1926.