

# G.P.O. WAR MEMORIAL.

DEBT TO SOLDIERS.

## WHAT THE COMMONWEALTH HAS DONE.

The Postmaster-General (Mr. Poynton) on Tuesday unveiled a war memorial tablet in the Adelaide G.P.O., on which is inscribed 48 names of officers of the post, telegraph, and telephone departments who lost their lives in the great war. The tablet occupies a position on the southern wall of the main hall. The hall and the gallery above were filled with officers of the department and the public.

The Deputy Postmaster-General (Mr. E. W. Brammie) said the memorial was a marble tablet similar to those erected in other G.P.O.'s in Australia. It was designed by the Commonwealth Works Director in South Australia, and the work had been creditably carried out in South Australia marble by a South Australian contractor. (Cheers.) Mr. Poynton, who was the first South Australian to be Federal Postmaster-General, had always taken a deep interest in the soldiers. South Australian officers who were ineligible for active service had contributed to funds to provide comforts for their comrades who were fighting, to the substantial amount of £8,000. (Cheers.) There was an honor board provided by the officers of the department containing the names of all who enlisted. This marble tablet bore the names of those who had made the supreme sacrifice.

Mr. Poynton, who was accorded a good reception, drew aside the flags covering the tablet. He related a story of a chauffeur who drove him during the election campaign of 1914. This man had, he believed, formerly been a reader at "The Advertiser" office. While at Denial Bay, on the West Coast, news came through that war had been declared, and the chauffeur at once telegraphed to the Defence Department offering his services. He received no reply, but continued to write and telegraph from every town visited. Notwithstanding that, the authorities made no response. Eventually he (Mr. Poynton) gave the man leave to motor to Adelaide from Cowell, and returned home by steamer. The chauffeur went into camp the day he reached the city. Later he proceeded to the war, won Imperial and French decorations, and was fortunate enough to come home again. (Cheers.)

The Minister expressed the deepest sympathy with the relatives of the men who had not returned from the war. He understood their feelings, because he had lost a son and knew the agony that attended the first news that a dear one had made

a son and knew the agony that attended the first news that a dear one had made the supreme sacrifice. He hoped the time would never arrive when Australia would have cause to regret what it was doing in connection with the repatriation of soldiers. The South Australian Postal Department had a splendid record in the war. The enlistments numbered more than 300, or 20 per cent. of the staff. In addition 55 had been rejected, and 18 could not be spared. Of those who went to the war 22 had received military promotions. (Cheers.) He claimed, in behalf of the Federal Government, that they had honored, and were still honoring the promises they had made to the soldiers. (Cheers.) Preference had been given to returned soldiers in various departments. In South Australia there were 164 returned men employed in temporary capacities, and 89 had been appointed to the permanent staff. He had persuaded the Federal Treasurer to provide funds which would enable the department to retain in employment throughout the Commonwealth 885 at present engaged on telegraph and telephone work. In addition to that they would be able to employ 481 if the programme he had initiated in connection with the extension of telephones and telegraphs throughout the Commonwealth were carried out. (Cheers.)

Dealing generally with what the Commonwealth had done in repatriation benefits, Mr. Poynton said there were to-day 222,537 receiving pensions, and the annual pension liability was £6,915,444. They had found employment between April 8, 1918, and June 30, 1921, for 217,258 men. (Cheers.) Vocational training, including efficiency courses by night tuition, had been given to 60,184; and general assistance, medical treatment, furniture, tools of trade, &c., had been provided for 415,724. That made a total of 693,168 individual cases. (Cheers.) The employment section since its inception had expended £2,318,479, of which £1,760,612 was represented by sustenance payments. Vocational training had cost £3,258,652. There had been provided a very considerable number of war service homes, many soldiers had been established in small businesses, and others had been assisted in different ways. On the land settlement side advances amounting to £2,344,215 had been made by the Commonwealth to the State of South Australia for settling soldiers on the land. There had been 7,055 applicants in South Australia, and the local authorities had approved of 5,582 and settled 2,578. The total Commonwealth expenditure to June 30, 1921, on various forms of assistance was £74,000,000. Some people might be inclined when called upon to pay taxation to forget what the soldiers had done, but he hoped the people would be patriotic enough to recognise the great sacrifice the fighters had made for the nation. He trusted it would never be said of veterans of the great war, as it had been said of some of the Crimean warriors, that they died in the workhouse. The Federal Government were determined to honor the pledges they had made to the men. (Cheers.)