

**Newspaper Coverage
in Australia**

on the

Maltese of New Caledonia Incident

1916

A research project by

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Sydney Morning Herald

Tuesday 26 September 1916

MALTESE LABOURERS. ARRIVAL IN AUSTRALIA. MELBOURNE

The reported arrival of a party of more than 90 Maltese by a recent overseas steamer is being inquired into by the Minister for External Affairs (Mr. Mahon). The Minister stated to-day that he had been assured that these men had not come out under contract, but entirely at their own expense and initiative. Mr. Mahon expressed himself as very skeptical on this point, and he has determined to test the statement by inquiries in Australia.

He thinks it rather remarkable that such a large number of these men should arrive in one ship at this time. It has been reported to the Minister that other detachments of Maltese are on their way to Australia. If the rumour referred to should prove correct, Mr. Mahon will regard it as a proof that someone is indirectly attempting to defeat the law against the introduction of contract labour.

Hitherto the education test has not been applied to the natives of Malta; but in the event of an onrush in large numbers of persons of a foreign race, Mr. Mahon thinks its application would be justified, and he proposes to adopt that precaution.

Sydney Morning Herald

Wednesday 27 September 1916

MALTESE LABOURERS. Replying to Captain Toomba, Mr Cann said that none of the Maltese labourers arriving in this State were under contract to the Government, to any contractors employed by the Government, or, so far as the Government could discover to anyone else.

Those men, said Mr. Cann, "*are all British subjects, and have a perfect right to come to New South Wales if they wish.*"

Mr. Levy: *They are more British than he is.*

Sydney Morning Herald

Friday 29 September 1916

MALTESE LABOURERS.

Mr. Haynes asked the Premier if there was any truth in the rumour that upwards of 1000 Maltese labourers had arrived in this State.

Mr. Holman said that there was absolutely no foundation in the statement. He presumed that if there was any such serious irruption of imported labour, the Immigration Department would know about it as soon as anybody else and they knew nothing about it.

"But I would take the opportunity of pointing out another aspect of this so-called irruption Maltese labour," went on the Premier. *If these men are British subjects, then they will be just as much subject to any military regulation that may be issued as anybody else. (Hear, hear.) The affair has been used in connection with the introduction of conscription. I believe the whole thing is only a silly effort to create prejudice. If they come here, and conscription is carried, they will be as much liable as anybody else.*" (Hear, hear.)

Sydney Morning Herald

Saturday 30 September 1916

MALTESE LABOURERS - ADVERSE ATTITUDE OF UNION LITHGOW.

Regarding the visit of 20 Maltese, who sought work at the ironworks and Hoskins's coke ovens, Mr. C. G. Hoskins invited the secretary of the Ironworkers' Union to meet him, when he explained that he had made application to the Labour Bureau for 10 employees, and apparently the arrival of the Maltese was the result. It was a matter for the union whether they would accept them as workmates.

A meeting of the blast furnace men was held, and it was unanimously decided not to allow the men to start. The decision was communicated to an interpreter for the visitors, who returned to Sydney by the night train. The union secretary had a conversation with the leader who stated that 19 of the men arrived in the State on Friday. Half of them could speak English. He said there were many Maltese on the way to Australia. They knew Australia was a good country.

Sydney Morning Herald

Thursday 5 October 1916

REFERENDUM - AUSTRALIA'S HONOUR OUR UNITS MUST BE HELPED. SPEECH BY PROFESSOR PEDEN.

DISHONEST TO THE MEN

Dr Read, who was announced as having just returned from the front, said that the men in the trenches sometimes worked continuously for 36 hours, and it was on their behalf that he appealed to them to vote 'Yes' on the 28th. If they turned down the referendum they would be dishonest to the men who had died for Australia (applause) *Who were these men*, he asked *who said that this country had done enough'* They had not fought on Gallipoli, and would fight nowhere, they would prefer to pay coloured men to fight their battles for them (applause) The cry about the **Maltese** labourers imported into Australia being compelled to work for 2s a day was ridiculed by the speaker, who said that the wages boards had been introduced so that no man should be asked to do a day's work for less than a fair day's pay.

If Great Britain were defeated Australia would be one of the first countries that Germany would claim as her prize (applause). Some of the anti-conscriptionists said that after the single men, the married men would be taken. Mr Hughes had never gone back on his word (applause and cries of "He has"). The Prime Minister was no coward; he had been right into the front-line trenches (applause). The people would be doing the best thing for their country if they voted 'Yes' (applause).

The chairman declared the motion carried with six dissents.

The Mercury, Hobart

Thursday 19 October 1916

IMPORTATION OF CHEAP LABOUR NOT TO BE PERMITTED. STATEMENT BY MR. HUGHES.

The Federal Prime Minister (Mr. Hughes) today gave a comprehensive reply to the various statements that have been made with regard to the introduction of coloured labour into Australia. One of the devices of the anti-conscriptionists during this campaign, he said, has been to attempt to make the people of this country believe that the proposals of the Ministry are being put forward as a prelude to the introduction of coloured or cheap labour. This is not sufficient, however, for those who every day invent fresh misrepresentations to delude the public.

Information has been received that another batch of **Maltese** are on their way to Australia on the Messageries Maritime s.s. Gange. These men, in the ordinary course of events, would have been admitted, but owing to not having given an undertaking that during the war no labour would be admitted into Australia, I have notified the British authorities that it was not the intention of the Commonwealth Government to admit these men into Australia. The Government of Malta, as the result of a communication from me, has also undertaken not to issue any further passports for Australia.

The Argus, Melbourne

Thursday 19 October 1916

MALTESE IMMIGRANTS. DENIED ADMISSION'. MR. HUGHES STATES POLICY.

The question of coloured labour has been given a good deal of prominence by anti-conscriptionists during the present campaign and much has also been said regarding an alleged influx of Maltese to take the place of Australians who are sent out of the country to fight. The Prime Minister (Mr. Hughes) yesterday gave a comprehensive reply to the curious statements that have been made under these headings.

"One of the devices of the anti-conscriptionists during this campaign he said has been to attempt to make the people of this country believe that the proposals of the Ministry are being put forward as a prelude to the introduction of coloured or cheap labour into Australia. I have already dealt with this matter at nearly every meeting at which I have spoken, and I have made a definite statement on behalf of the Ministry that during the continuance of the war no coloured or cheap labour would be allowed to enter Australia.

"This is not sufficient however for those who every day invent fresh misrepresentations in order to delude the public. Their latest invention has taken the shape of a more or less definite statement about a large influx of Maltese. At an anti-conscription meeting recently it was stated that 4,000 Maltese had landed in the Northern Territory. At another meeting the feelings of the audience were harrowed by a statement to the effect that all arrangements had been made for the influx of coloured labour after the date of the referendum. There is of course absolutely no foundation whatever for those statements. They are wicked inventions put forward by men who know them to be quite without foundation but who hope to be able to fool a credulous public.

"The official figures regarding the arrival of Maltese in Australia," continued Mr. Hughes, "show that the number of Maltese admitted during this year was considerably less than in 1913 when 193 were admitted, or in the first six months of 1914 when 404 arrived. Information has been received that another batch of 200 are on their way to Australia on the Messageries Maritimes s.s. Gange. These men in the ordinary course of events would have been admitted but owing to my having given an undertaking that during the war no coloured labour would be admitted into Australia, I have notified the British authorities that it is not the intention of the Commonwealth Government to admit them into Australia, The Governor of Malta, as the result of a communication from me has also undertaken not to issue any further passports for Australia."

The Mercury, Hobart

Saturday 21 October 1916

MALTESE IMMIGRANTS: PARTY BY THE GANGE TO BE SENT BACK TO FEMANTLE. The French steamer Gange arrived from Marseille to-day. She was not brought into the river, the reason, it is stated, being that it has on board 240 Maltese. According to the Prime Minister's statement, published to-day, these men are to be sent back. The Gange required 500 tons of coal.

The West Australian

Tuesday 31 October 1916

MALTESE ON THE GANGE: LANDING IN MELBOURNE PROHIBITED. The FMS Gange which arrived at Port Melbourne on Saturday had on board 214 Maltese, who had booked through to Sydney. They were prohibited from landing, and the railway pier at which the Gange was the only vessel berthed, was at once placed under a strong military guard. The Maltese will be carried on to Noumea but what will then happen is not known. They did not come out under contract.

Northern Territory Times and Gazette

Thursday 9 November 1916

Monday telegram says: The French steamer Gange, which arrived at Port Melbourne on Saturday, had on board 214 Maltese who had booked through to Sydney. They were prohibited from landing and the railway pier at which the Gange was the only vessel berthed, was at once placed under a strong military guard. The Maltese will be carried on to Noumea, but what will then happen is not known. They did not come out under contract.

The Argus, Melbourne

Friday 10 November 1916

Escape from French Steamer. SYDNEY - A number of Maltese who had been prohibited from landing in Australia escaped to-night from the Messageries Maritimes steamer Gange.

The men had recently returned from Noumea and were due to leave at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning by the Gange for Noumea, where, it is thought, they will be able to settle. The men evidently thought that by getting ashore they would be able to receive help from their fellow countrymen in Sydney and pass muster here unsuspected. A search is being made for them, and some, it is believed, have been taken back to the ship. As the result of the episode, the Gange was removed at 9 o'clock to-night from Circular Quay to Neutral Bay.

The Argus, Melbourne

Monday 13 November 1916

Maltese Arrested. The 15 Maltese who escaped from the French liner Gange at Sydney Harbour on Thursday evening were all arrested during the night, They were charged at the Water Police Court on Friday with being prohibited immigrants They were found within the Commonwealth The Court was informed that the Maltese were to be put back on the Gange and taken to Noumea. They were accordingly discharged.

Sydney Morning Herald

Saturday 25 November 1916

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD – THE MALTESE

Sir, Please allow me, as a returned soldier, to express my views re the Maltese question, which at the present time is burning rather high. And expressing myself as I intend doing, I am voicing most of the returned boys' opinions.

About 250 Maltese are kept on the Gange, not allowed to land in Australia. But why? Are they not British Subjects? Are they not white? Maybe they are whiter than some who at the present moment call themselves Australians.

Where would the boys have been on the 25th April 1915, had not the Maltese kept up the line of communication? How many of them partook in the naval battle of Jutland? How did they treat the boys whom they got to Malta? And this is the way we repay them? O God, is this fair play? Are we playing the game? Surely, if they obtained a passport from the Governor of Malta to proceed to Australia, no Governor in Australia could stop them from landing. And It is not as if they were assisted out, because they all paid their passage across.

We claim a white Australia. Who did Australia belong to in the first place, two hundred years ago? The blacks. Well, and how did we treat them? Every white man knows how? We have treated, and are treating the natives, so there is no need to go into detail. But, as we refuse 250 British-born Subjects to land in Australia, though born in Malta, why don't we refuse everybody else the right to land? We seem to prefer the Hun and Austrian in our midst, not to mention the Greek, Turk, Bulgar and Syrian. No, clear Australia of those black-hearted individuals first, before we refuse our own brothers the right to live and work in any part of the Empire; and Justice and duty is done.

I am,

MEMBER OF THE RSL

The Argus, Melbourne

Monday 11 December 1916

Maltese Immigrants. To the House of Representatives on Friday, the Prime Minister (Mr Hughes) stated in reply to Mr Riley (NSW), that a party of Maltese immigrants had been refused permission to land in Australia during the month of October. Two hundred Maltese had arrived by the steamship Gange but were taken on to Noumea in New Caledonia. Arrangements were being made for their return to Malta. It was intended that only those should be allowed to land in Australia who were former residents of Australia They numbered about eight or nine.

Sydney Morning Herald

Thursday 21 December 1916

MALTESE IMMIGRANTS

Four **Maltese** who had been remanded from time to time at the Water Police Court on charges of being **prohibited** Immigrants, were yesterday discharged from custody, arrangements having been made for their return to Malta.

Sydney Morning Herald

Saturday 30 December 1916

THE PROHIBITED MALTESE – LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD.

Sir,

During this Christmas-tide, I have been feeling keenly that the exclusion and threatened repatriation of the **Maltese** immigrants, who are now in Australia is not only opposed to the principles and precepts of the Christian religion, which we as a people profess, but that it is also inimical to the best interests of the Empire to which belong. This feeling I am certain is shared by many thousands of our citizens throughout the Commonwealth. The **Maltese** have suffered and fought side by side with our troops and large numbers of them have died in the defence of freedom, which we and they enjoy.

They are British subjects as truly as we ourselves are and they have proved themselves to be loyal to King George as any of us are in Australia To exclude such men seems a most ungrateful return for the great love and kindness that was shown to our Australian sick and wounded men from the trenches of Gallipoli. It is no question of colour or white Australia policy for many others who are as dark in colour are admitted, while the British-born citizens of an integral part of the Empire are excluded

I am, of course, well aware that the action which has been taken, and that which is contemplated, the authorities are doing that which they believe to be most conducive to peace and good order in the Commonwealth but I venture to believe that many members of the Government must feel that a great injustice is being done to those people and that their exclusion from Commonwealth at this crises in the affairs of the Empire is calculated to do serious harm. It will undoubtedly produce a very undesirable impression in the home land and among the Allies, and will cause complications and will only add to crushing burden which the Imperial authorities have to bear at this time.

My object in writing is to suggest that a public meeting of the citizens of Sydney be called for the purpose of expressing our sympathy with the men themselves and to assure the Government that there are thousands in Australia who will feel deeply the disgrace that will have to share, if these are fellow subjects are excluded from our shores

GEO. BROWN

Gordon. Dec. 26

The Mercury, Hobart

Saturday 6 January 1917

MALTESE IMMIGRANTS.THEIR, CAUSE ESPOUSED.

The cause of the Maltese immigrants is espoused by Mr. Arthur Rickards, the President of the Millions Club. Mr. Rickards stated to-day that the whole of the batch of 214 Maltese who recently arrived had paid their own fares out, and had come provided with passports from the British Government.

Of 200 sent to Noumea, half were married and 63 had fought alongside our men in Gallipoli, while a large proportion of others had offered to enlist in Malta, or with the Australian Forces. Four of the Maltese confined at the Malay quarantine station have addressed an appeal to a sympathiser, in which they state that they have no objection to offering for war service for the Empire, as they had already done it at Melbourne and Fremantle.

They say they had no knowledge of the prohibitory regulations against their landing in Australia, otherwise they would never have left Malta.

Sydney Morning Herald

Tuesday 9 January 1917

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD

Sir, Permit me a little space in your valuable paper to draw attention to the question of emigrated **Maltese**. As a Malteao myself, and residing in Sydney for nearly six years, I wish to challenge anybody who states that emigrated Maltese are assisted by any Government. They pay their own full fares to Australia, or any other part of the globe. Who are the scientific gentlemen who think that the **Maltese** are a coloured race, or that they are not British Subjects?

Can they tell me what Malta was one hundred and twenty years ago? do they know the patriotism of Malta? Do they know the blood Malta has shed for the cause of freedom and liberty against the French, Turks and Spaniards? Do they know what Malta has done since the outbreak of the present great war, fighting side by side with Australians at the famous battle of Gallipoli, or that over 500 of them went down in the Jutland battle? Why? For the freedom and protection of our country, Empire and flag. Do they know that when Australians were wounded and sick, and landed in Malta hospitals nothing was too good for them, being well cared for by the **Maltese** Red Cross and community, while, I am sorry to say, at that very time these pure subjects of the King were being refused admittance to Australia. They could realise their duty at the shipwreck of the Arabia, when passengers and crew were landed in Valletta, and given a warm and royal time. It is not as if these country men of mine were over flooding the country living immorally, or harming their comrades, because only about 800 have arrived for the last three years.

In reference to cheap labour, it is a scandalous thing to talk about. When I was engaged by the Government as Interpreter about four years ago at the North Coast railway construction works, I can frankly state that my gang consisted of men of good physique, possessed of great energy and had everything to recommend them as desirable settlers. Those since arriving are just the same, or perhaps with better knowledge and more industrious.

Apart from that, they were all anxious to join unions, pay their contributions, and attend their meetings. It is a pity and rather incredible to me that for political reasons any Government should have decided to exclude them

If there any Briton or Australian who has been refused admittance to Malta, I am sure there is not one in the country. We will be only too pleased to make their acquaintance as British subjects. Why then is it that we are refused admission? Sometime in August out I remember that the Prime Minister Mr Hughes stated at Adelaide that if Australia was to be held it must of necessity be peopled by after war Immigration

I thank Mr Arthur Rickard for his sympathy and support towards my countrymen I suggest that a public meeting be held at the Town Hall, or any other suitable place, to protest against Maltese being refused admittance in Australia and to ask for the release immediately of the 214 Maltese recently arrived and at present in custody. May I suggest also that in reference to patriotism I tried to enlist three times but was turned down. I am doing my utmost once again to try to be fit to go and meet the Teutons to defend my country, Empire and home.

I am, etc,

PAUL THEODORE PHILLIPS.

NB. In a database compiled by Mark Caruana of passports issued from Malta in 1911 and held at the Malta National Archives at Rabat Malta, there is an application for a passport by Thomas Philips, born in Senglea on the 1st Nov 1886 and residing at Hamrun. Thomas was then aged 25 and married to Carmela and the destination given was Alexandria, Egypt. From Egypt, he must have boarded a ship to Australia.

The Advertiser, Adelaide

Wednesday 10 January 1917

THE MALTESE.AUSTRALIA PAYING THE PIPER. No decision has been come to regarding what shall be done with the 200 Maltese who came to Australia while the referendum campaign was in progress, and being refused a landing, were taken out to New Caledonia. Some difficulty appears to have arisen over their repatriation, as they are British subjects, and in the meantime the Commonwealth Government is piling up a substantial bill for their maintenance.

Sydney Morning Herald

Tuesday 16 January 1917

MALTESE

The arrival at Noumea of over 200 prohibited British subjects abroad has created much comment there, according to the latest files brought by the FMS Pacifique on Sunday. The people of Noumea do not understand why these Maltese have been banned by their fellow British subjects, and are curious to know what the Commonwealth Government's intentions are in regard to the matter.

The Mercury, Hobart

Thursday 22 February 1917

DEPORTED MALTESE - REPORTED RETURN FROM NOUMEA.

It is reported that the Maltese who were deported during the conscription campaign to Noumea are returning to-morrow by steamer. It is understood that the Government has refitted an old hulk anchored in Sydney Harbour and the Maltese will stay aboard this vessel until arrangements have been made for their return to Malta.

Sydney Morning Herald

Tuesday 27 February 1917

MALTESE CONSIGNED TO AN OLD HULK. MEN'S HEALTH IMPAIRED.

One hundred and eighty two Maltese returned to Sydney from Noumea yesterday in the steamer St Louis. They were transhipped to Neutral Bay to an old hulk, where they will stay until a vessel leaves for Malta

The St Louis has not the proper quarters for carrying so large a number of passengers for the Maltese totaled. Consequently the space was very limited, and the conditions far from satisfactory. Now the men are consigned to an old hulk, to await, what possibly be for an indefinite period, the departure of a steamer for Malta,

The treatment these immigrants have received has had, it is stated, more or less, a serious effect on their health.

Sydney Morning Herald

Wednesday 28 February 1917

MALTESE IMMIGRANTS. LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD.

Sir,

It is as well that the public should know the circumstances in connection with the **Maltese** who are prohibited from entering the Commonwealth. These men have been kept for three months at **Noumea** and have now been brought to Sydney and placed on board a hulk, pending an opportunity to repatriate them. The expenditure in connection with these men must now total many thousands of pounds. These men left Malta before any idea of prohibiting **Maltese** had entered the minds of the authorities here. They paid their fares in good faith, and owing to political exigencies Mr Hughes refused to admit them. Had he prohibited further immigration from Malta to Australia, and allowed these men who were already on the water, to enter the Commonwealth one could at least say that he had acted fairly. It should be known that many of these men left at Malta their wives and families, and promised to remit from time to time sufficient money to keep them. As they are poor people, a good deal of destitution has resulted. Further, a number of the men have fought for the Empire and now have their discharges. They state that 65 of their number fought in Gallipoli alongside our men.

It is unnecessary to repeat here what has already appeared at various times in our columns in regard to the loyalty of the Maltese and it is a fact that great numbers of them have fought and died for the Empire.

In the great war those already here have proved to be law-abiding and hard-working. They have joined the unions, and have conformed to our standard of living. In this matter these men have been treated as though they were lepers. It is inconceivable that any person can imagine that in a continent having a larger area than that of the United States we cannot find room for 200 hard-working men. One great point in regard to the Maltese is that they are always willing to go to the country. It is true that there is a certain amount of unemployment here now, and it is greatly to be deplored but throughout the backcountry there is an insistent demand for labour which could be filled, but our men will not leave the cities.

In all the circumstances would it not be a graceful act on the part of the unions who are so strongly objecting to the Maltese immigration to come forward now and urge that these men should be allowed to enter the Commonwealth provided further Maltese immigration be barred until the war ends? To my mind this is an outstanding example of man's inhumanity to man. There is yet time to save the reputation of Australia and to show that we can appreciate the excellent treatment that was accorded our wounded soldiers by the Maltese. Eloquent facts in regard to this treatment of our soldiers by the Maltese are constantly being received here, and the least we can do is to allow these men who are British subjects to enter our Commonwealth. I had a petition prepared and it was largely signed by influential people, begging the Government to reconsider the question of the exclusion of these Maltese. Public opinion is undoubtedly in favour of their admission. Will our legislators still maintain the unreasonable, if not cruel attitude they have assumed? There is yet time to do the right thing, and I trust that Mr. Hughes will not fail in the public duty which is so manifest.

If the authorities would allow presents of food- any fruit- to be given to these men during their incarceration, I am sure that a number of people would be glad of the opportunity of showing them some little attention as some slight recognition of the extreme kindness and generosity of the Maltese to our wounded.

Arthur Rickard

Sydney Morning Herald

Saturday 3 March 1917

FEDERAL SESSION - HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - **MALTESE** IN SYDNEY.

The question of the **Maltese** now being detained on a hulk in Sydney Harbour was raised by Mr. Austin Chapman (NSW) in the House of Representatives this morning. He asked what the Government Intended to do with them.

Mr. Bruce Smith (NSW) also inquired what legal justification there was for keeping British subjects imprisoned within the three mile limit.

The **Prime Minister**, in reply, outlined the circumstances surrounding the transportation of the 182 **Maltese** to **New Caledonia**, and their return to Sydney. There was no question of legality involved. He said the Government was anxious to do what was best in the interests of the Commonwealth, and earnest consideration was now being given to the matter. He hoped shortly to be able to put a proposal before the House that would be acceptable.

The Sydney Morning Herald

Thursday 8 March 1917

MALTESE ESCAPE.

On Tuesday morning four Maltese escaped from the hulk Anglian, which is lying in Berry's Bay. The men left the hulk by diving overboard while fully dressed. They had to swim thirty yards to the shore. The escapees then went into the scrub at Ball's Head, where they dried their clothes. The North Sydney police were notified of the escape, and two of the Maltese were eventually captured.

The West Australian

Thursday 8 March 1917

A BOLT FOR LIBERTY. MALTESE IMMIGRANTS ESCAPE. TWO STILL AT LARGE.

Four of the batch of Maltese who are detained on the bulk Anglian in Berry's Bay, escaped on Monday by swimming ashore. Two of them were recaptured by North Sydney policemen a couple of hours later, but the other pair gained their liberty. The hulk is now being guarded by the water police, while the water police launch is doing patrol duty in Berry's Bay.

The men left the hulk in the morning, in broad daylight. Fully dressed, they dived overboard, and had no trouble in swimming thirty yards to the shore. They then went into the scrub on Ball's Head, and removed their clothes, which they hung out to dry on the bushes. When the police reached Ball's Head, the Maltese, who were fully dressed, bolted for the rocks. The police went after them, and an exciting chase followed.

The Maltese scampered over the rocks along the foreshore, and through the dense scrub, and the policemen could not get near them. They dodged backwards and forwards, and gave their pursuers an exceedingly lively tune. Two of the escapees were caught. The others eluded the officers, and, although the surrounding country was searched, no trace of them could be found. The arrested men, who were charged with being prohibited immigrants, will be brought before the North Sydney Court tomorrow.

The Brisbane Courier

Friday 9 March 1917

THE STRANDED MALTESE. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S POSITION. STATEMENT BY MR. HUGHES.

Mr. Johnson asked the Prime Minister in the House of Representatives to-day whether he had heard that the sisters and children of the Maltese were starving, whilst they were being imprisoned.

Mr. Hughes said he had seen the Rev. Father Bonett, who was acting on their behalf, and had told the Rev. gentleman that the Government was forced into the position by statements made at the referendum that hordes of coloured races were about to enter the Commonwealth. He had told him 'that if he could give an assurance that they could be found employment, and join the unions, the Government would do all possible to help them. He had pointed out to the Rev. gentleman that they had done all they could to get transport for them.

The Advertiser, Adelaide

Thursday 22 March 1917

ALLOWED TO LAND AND NOW AT WORK. 900 MEMBERS OF THE A.W.U.

With the exception of about 50 all the Maltese who have been detained in Sydney have been allowed to land. There were about 180 in the original shipment, and they have been drafted into employment in batches of from 10 to 20. It is expected that the remaining 50 will be found employment within the next few days. In view of the great commotion raised at the time of the conscription referendum over the arrival of Maltese immigrants, it comes as a surprise to know that there are already about 900 Maltese in the Australian Workers' Union.

The authority for this statement is Mr. G. C. Bodkin, secretary of the Railway Workers and General Laborers' section of the Australian Workers' Union in New South Wales. He mentioned that the Maltese who were scattered throughout the State had proved to be good workmen. "We try to get them into our habits and to work them in twos and threes with our men for that purpose," he continued. "If allowed to assemble in gangs of 20 or 30 they stick to their own customs. We do not "hold out any inducement for them to come to this country, but when they are here they have to earn their living in some way or other."

Western Argus Kalgoorlie, WA

Tuesday 1 May 1917

THE MALTESE INCIDENT. MR. McMAHON REPLIES TO MR. HUGHES.

On Saturday we published a telegram from the Prime Minister to the secretary of the National Federation, Kalgoorlie in which comment is made on the action of Mr. Mahon, when Minister for External Affairs, in regard to certain Maltese immigrants. In reply, Mr. Mahon makes the following statement: "To elicit the truth, I invited Mr. Hughes to produce the official papers. He responds by merely quoting extracts from some of the. The others, those which do not suit, are suppressed by him.

"But even Mr. Hughes' quotations confirm my previous statement that no Maltese were admitted by me. The Maltese who came in during 1915-16 were admitted accordance with a practice established when Mr. Hughes was Minister for External Affairs in 1904. found no necessity to depart from that practice. "None of the 200 Maltese who came by the steamer 'Ganges' landed in Australia during my term & Minister for External Affairs. They have all landed since, and by M Hughes' own directions. His evasions and distortions cannot obscure this Alpine fact. The confessions that he allowed all these Maltese into Australia is recorded in his own words. It will be found in 'Hansard' No. 88, page 11 177: "There are many contradictions. in Mr. Hughes' message, as listed. One only requires notice. He states, 'the matter was submitted to Mahon by Prime Minister for decision,' etc.

Again he adds that he gave me 'special instructions' about the same 'matter. Clearly a matter submitted for my 'decision' could not be the subject of an 'instruction.' However both statements are not only contradictory, but equally incorrect. "I never received or took instructions, from Mr. Hughes or any other Prime Minister concerning a matter under my Ministerial jurisdiction. This Maltese matter came entirely within my purview as Minister for External Affairs. It was not submitted by Mr. Hughes to me; on the contrary, for reasons which should be obvious, it was submitted, or rather remitted, by me to him. "Had Mr. Hughes issued 'instructions,' they must be on record. Why did he not quote them?

"Mr. Hughes is dubbed by admirers 'a great Imperial statesman.' Let us see how he handled this matter, in which an issue of grave international character is involved. The Maltese are a white race. They are also British subjects. Thousands of them are to-day fighting for the Empire and for Australia. Others have received our wounded Australians into their homes at Malta, and nursed them back to health. The permanent exclusion of Maltese from a part of the Empire must necessarily embarrass the statesman and generals charged with the conduct of this war. But Mr. Hughes had no eye for the troubles of others. He saw only his own difficulty. Referendum day was approaching. Australians were being sent to Europe, and here was a body of Maltese coming to Australia to fill their places in our mines and fields and factories. So to surmount his difficulty for the moment, he dispatched the Maltese to Noumea, confined them later on a hulk in Sydney harbour, releasing them eventually by compulsion of his new allies, Mr. Joseph Cook and party.

"His goldfields admirers have not assisted Mr. Hughes in forcing explanations from him about the Maltese. He cuts a pitiable figure throughout. He showed no consideration for Imperial interests his action. He inflicted unmerited sufferings on the Maltese and the wives and children. For the sake of his own reputation, Mr. Hughes should endeavour to consign the whole transaction, were it possible into deep oblivion."

The West Australian

Wednesday 2 May 1917

THE MALTESE QUESTION - FURTHER STATEMENT BY MR HUGHES.

MR. MAHON'S LAX ADMINISTRATION. The secretary of the National Federation has received the following lettergram for the Prime Minister regarding Mr. Mahon's connection with the Maltese episode at the time of the conscription referendum.

Dealing with Mahon's assertions: (1) No Maltese were admitted by him (2) He invited me take charge of matters. (3) There was no inflow of Maltese during his administration of External Affairs Department. (4) I gave him no instructions re exclusion of Maltese. (5) There was laxity in his administration of his department.

"I send following official statement compiled by department that speaks for itself. Report: Maltese admitted while Mahon Minister - 1915, 40; 1916, 38; plus 97; total 175.

"In August, 1916, when his attention drawn to 97 coming, he wrote Senator Buzacott to effect that there was no information in department concerning them, but was instituting inquiry as to whether they were under contract. In September, 1916, when reports received of further batch of 300 or 400, Mahon approved of a suggestion by secretary of department to request Imperial authorities to instruct Government of Malta not to issue passports to (a) Single men of military age unless certified as unfit for active service. (b) Married men not accompanied by their wives. In October 1916, fresh rumours were circulated about a further batch of 200 or 300 Maltese said to be arriving by steamer Gange. McMahon's attention drawn to this, but he instructed that no action be taken to issue definite instructions as to courses to be followed with regard to them pending reply from Secretary of State.

In meantime Prime Minister Hughes made a definite announcement to the effect that the 200 Maltese arriving by Gange would not be permitted to land "the matter was submitted to Mahon by Prime Minister for decision on the following points.

(1) Is the test to be applied? (2) If so at Fremantle or at point of destination? (3) Is it to be applied to all men, including (a) those who have been here before, (b) married men, (e) men physically unfit for active service?

"Mahon's decisions were in reply to: (1) Yes; (2) at port of destination; (3) (a) no (b) not if accompanied by wives and children, (c) yes.

"As Hughes had made definite pronouncements and given verbal direction to Secretary of External Affairs Department in connection with matter, Mahon directed that the papers be referred to Prime Minister before issuing instructions. He minuted the papers:- I have informed the Government that these men cannot be allowed to land. This applies to all men. I have notified French Consul-General of position, and asked his co-operation diverting ships from Australia. Matter to stand until tomorrow, Tuesday, 17th.

The instructions are if the men arrive in Australia the test is to be applied at the first port at which the ship touches to all men, and all are to be excluded. It will, therefore be seen that with regard to the first assertion, as above report really shows, Maltese were admitted by Mahon. As to the second, it is not true that Mahon invited me to take charge of the matter. I took charge of my own initiative when his lax administration made it unsafe leave matter in his hands. As to the third official report shows Maltese were admitted during his administration. As to the fourth, I did give him special instructions re Maltese as above official report plainly shows. As to the fifth, as official report clearly proves, his administration was so lax as to compel me to take it out of his hands

(Signed) Hughes Prime Minister.

The Argus, Melbourne

Friday 7 September 1917

EXCLUSION OF MALTESE

Referring yesterday to the exclusion of a number of Maltese from Australia at the time of the conscription referendum, the Prime Minister Mr Hughes informed Mi Higgs (Q) in the House of Representatives that these Minister had remained in New Caledonia for about three months and had then returned to Australia, where all but six who were rejected on account of disease had been admitted. The Commonwealth had paid 2,234 pounds for their maintenance while in New Caledonia.

Sydney Morning Herald

Saturday 4 October 1919

DETAINED MALTESE! COST TO THE COUNTRY. It was stated by Senator Russell in the Senate to-day, in reply to a question, that in October, 1916, on the eve of the conscription campaign, the Gange arrived with 214 Maltese passengers for Australia. The unexpected and inopportune arrival of the men gave colour to the wildly circulated but totally incorrect statement that the Government were Introducing Maltese to take the place of Australian soldiers who were serving at the front.

The men on the Gange were, therefore, refused admission under the provisions of the Immigration Act. They were taken by the Gange on to Noumea, but as that vessel had been chartered by the French Government to carry troops back to France it was necessary to land the Maltese at Noumea, pending further arrangements being made for their repatriation.

"Owing to the shortage of shipping, efforts to repatriate the men were unsuccessful, and they were brought back to Sydney, where they were detained pending efforts to secure passages for Malta. Eventually they were permitted to land at Sydney on guarantees being given that they would join unions, and that employment would be found for them. The total cost of maintenance at Noumea was £2,332, and at Sydney £743. The owners of the ship were paid for damage and other expenses incurred in connection with this matter the sum of £4,050.