



HON. MR. MCLEAN
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Sir Edmund Barton, the first premier of united Australia, and his successor, Mr. Deakin, had to depend on Labour votes to keep them in power. Labour and Protection helped to keep Mr. George Reid, leader of the Free Trade Opposition, on the wrong side of the House. At length Mr. Watson and his colleagues of the Labour party persuaded themselves that it was time to assume office and its responsibilities. Mr. Deakin was defeated, and Mr. Watson accepted the task of forming a ministry. It was wholly composed of men who had actually depended for their livelihood at one time or other on manual labour, with the one exception of Mr. H. B. Higgins, one of the prominent members of the Melbourne bar. He accepted the Attorney-Generalship.

The other members of the Labour Ministry were decidedly interesting personages. Even their foes would have conceded one thing, namely, the common capacity for unremitting and earnest work. As one not over-friendly critic said: "They are like a band of ascetic brothers working at all hours to spread a new gospel." Mr. Watson, the defunct Premier, is a printer by trade, but early showed an interest in political affairs. He was

first elected for the Young seat in the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales. He and his colleagues showed themselves able to live on their indemnity, and thus are enabled to devote their whole time to their public duties. To this, undoubtedly, a large share of their success is due. Mr. Watson is described as being by no means of an impressive figure, but an indefatigable worker, a plain, convincing speaker, and with a great deal of patience, policy and flexibility of temper. Mr. Hughes, the Minister for External Affairs, had been an umbrella maker. He qualified himself to practise law during his spare time, but was not considered a sufficiently heavy weight to take up the duties of Attorney-General. Senator McGregor, Vice-President of the Council, was a bricklayer's labourer before he entered politics. Mr. Fisher, Minister of Customs, was a miner. Mr. Dawson, Minister of Defence, is a mechanical engineer, and is one of the cleverest debaters in the Australian Parliament. Mr. Mahon, the Postmaster-General, is a shorthand reporter, and learned his Parliamentary lore in the gallery of the House. Mr. Lee Batchelor is an engine fitter, and was the only native-born Australian in the defunct cabinet, although "Australia for the Australians" is one of the party's cries.



This group of men had gained a great reputation for their self-abnegation and self-sacrifice on behalf of the cause they represented. Their enemies say, however, that these qualities broke down in sight of office. Mr. Deakin, while in power, was dependent on the votes of the Labour party, who held the balance, with the consequence that many of the radical changes advocated by it were translated into statutes. But because he would not go far enough with them he perished. He resisted an amendment to the arbitration bill providing that civil servants should come under the scope of its operation. The free traders, however, supported the amendment, and Mr.