

From “Australia’s Foreign Wars: Origins, Costs, Future?!”
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Appendix L

Australia’s Governor-General, Lord Gowrie at the Australian War Memorial, November 11, 1941

In his speech during which he opened the Australian War Memorial on November 11, 1941, Australia’s Governor-General, Lord Gowrie, a VC winner from 1899 and WW1 veteran of Gallipoli and France (severely wounded at Gallipoli) presented his insightful view as to the complete failure of World War I to attain any useful purpose for the people of any of the combatant nations involved. Indeed, while praising the heroic efforts of Australia’s soldiers, including their willingness to sacrifice their lives for their country in a cause they believed would advance the freedom of mankind, he went on to stress the resulting all-round catastrophe for all concerned. As he aptly put it :*

“The war had lasted for four years. It was responsible for the death of eight million men and the wounding of sixteen million more. It caused universal desolation and distress without bringing any compensating advantages to any one of the belligerents. A war which settled nothing and in which all concerned came out losers.”

***Gowrie**, Lord Alexander, Governor-General of Australia, Address opening the Australian War Memorial November 11, 1941. (Canb.Times, 11.11.1941)
http://espace.library.curtin.edu.au:80/R?func=dbin_jump_full&object_id=86156&local_base=era01jcpml

The very well worthy-of-close-study **full transcript** (as link shows at ‘Digital file (16K)’, is reproduced hereunder:

WAR MEMORIAL CANBERRA, OFFICIAL OPENING, DATED SYDNEY 11 NOVEMBER 1941

Transcript of proceedings:

[Governor - General, Lord Gowrie]

“On this hour, on this day, 23 years ago, the cease fire sounded and the war, the First World War, came to an end. A war in which Australia had taken a very prominent, a very noble part; a part which not only encouraged and heartened our Allies, but a part which amazed and confounded our enemies.

From the moment the war started until the close of hostilities, Australia gave unsparingly, ungrudgingly, the best and the bravest of our young manhood. The record of their heroic deeds, of their self-sacrifice, of their devotion to duty, furnishes, without any doubt, one of the most inspiring and romantic chapters in the history of the British Empire. Many of those men did not return. They gave their lives for their King, for their country and to the immortal glory of the land from which they came. And it is in their honour that this memorial has been erected. This memorial that has been so artistically designed and that has been so magnificently executed.

And I should like to convey our thanks and our congratulations to all those who have been responsible for the design of this memorial and all those who have worked so zealously and so efficiently in its construction. They have made a contribution to the memory of those men who fought and fell. They have also made a contribution to the beauty and the dignity of our capital city. And we pay homage today to those men who lost their lives in the Great War; but we also pay homage to the silent heroism and the patriotic spirit of those they left behind. This is a sad day for them, but I can't help feeling it should be a proud day as well because I am certain that not one of them would have had those lads that they loved so well do otherwise than what they did. God bless them for it.

Now the war lasted for four years. It was responsible for the death of over eight million able-bodied men. It was responsible for the wounding and maiming of many, many millions more. It caused universal destruction, desolation and distress without bringing any compensating advantage to any one of the belligerents. It was a war which settled nothing; it was a war in which all concerned came out losers. For four years the hymn of hate, though called by different names, was sung with fervour throughout the so-called civilised world. All the most barbarous and inhuman instincts in mankind were aroused and stimulated. To cause painfulness and suffering, to hate and destroy was the goal to which all men's activities were directed.

But from the moment the cease-fire sounded, we hoped and trusted that our mental outlook would undergo a change; that our physical efforts would be deflected into other channels; that sympathy and toleration would replace hatred and contempt; that we should rebuild what we had so wantonly destroyed, and out of the ruins of the past erect a barrier, an impregnable barrier, against men's madness in the future. So when it was decided to build this memorial it was hoped that the story it unfolded would not only be a record of the splendid achievements of the men that

fought and fell in the war, but it would also be a reminder to future generations of the barbarity, of the utter futility of modern war. And that we should set to work to devise some better, some less barbarous, some less inhuman method of settling our international disputes than by international slaughter.

Unfortunately those hopes have not been fulfilled. The cease-fire that was sounded this day 23 years ago was not the final dismissal. It was only a temporary truce and we are now engaged in the most deadly contest that the world has ever known. Human life, money, material are being poured out like water and every instrument that human ingenuity can devise, all that human skill can construct, are being utilised for the destruction of our fellow men. Men, women and children are being ruthlessly massacred. Our young manhood, the flower of our young manhood, are once again giving their lives for our freedom and for the freedom of those that come after us. They are -- on land, sea and air -- emulating the splendid deeds of those men whose memory we are honouring today. They are showing the same courage, the same indomitable spirit as their fathers. Though we are today fighting for our very existence and for all that life is worth living for and it is in that atmosphere that we open this memorial today.

And when we read the names inscribed on these walls; when we read the casualty list that once again appear from day-to-day; we ask ourselves this question: What can we do for those who did so much? What can we give to those that gave us all? And I know that our answer will be that we are determined that these men shall not have died in vain, and that we are prepared for any sacrifice to put an end, once and for all, to this diabolical menace to mankind and ensure the peace of the world for generations to come. And when that peace does come; and when we awake from this hideous nightmare of modern war; and when these peace-loving citizens can once again pursue in safety their daily tasks; many from time to time will visit this shrine. For some it will revive memories of those they have loved and lost; others will conjure up visions of a better, a happier and a saner world; but all of them, everyone of them, I'm firmly convinced, will declare, and will declare with no uncertain voice, 'never again, never again.'

I have now the honour to declare the Australian National War Memorial open.”

['Advance Australia Fair' is sung]

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