



King O'Malley (1858?-1953)

Member for Tasmania 1901-1903

Member for Darwin (Tasmania) 1903-1917

King O'Malley was probably born in Valley Falls, Kansas, in the United States of America. As an American citizen, rather than a British subject, O'Malley would have been ineligible to stand for parliament in any British colony or for the Australian Federal Parliament. This may explain why O'Malley, throughout his political career in Australia, claimed to have been born in Quebec, Canada, and was thus a British subject. O'Malley was a successful insurance salesman who migrated to Victoria in 1888. He sold insurance in Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia, before being elected in 1896 to the South Australian House of Assembly for Encounter Bay. Defeated in the election of 1899, he returned to Tasmania.

A keen federationist, O'Malley was elected to the House of Representatives as an independent member for Tasmania at the first federal election and joined the Labor Party in June 1901. After Tasmania was divided into five federal electorates, he was returned as the member for Darwin in 1903.

In 1910 he was appointed Minister for Home Affairs in the second Fisher Ministry, and was responsible for the planning of the new national capital at Canberra. A member of a fundamentalist religious group, O'Malley was a strong prohibitionist who was largely responsible for the banning of alcohol in the Australian Capital Territory in its early years. He was also a pacifist who opposed conscription, which led to his defeat in the election of 1917. Although he stood for Federal Parliament in 1919 and 1922 he was not re-elected.

In 1908 O'Malley had presented Parliament with a plan for a national bank, and although the bank established by the Government in 1911 did not follow his plan, he took great pride, in his retirement, in claiming to be the founder of the Commonwealth Bank. O'Malley was the last member of the first Parliament to die.

The state of Tasmania did not divide into electoral divisions for the purposes of the first federal election. Tasmania, as a whole, was also represented in the first House of Representatives by:

Donald Norman Cameron
Sir Philip Oakley Fysh

Sir Edward Nicholas Coventry Braddon
Frederick William Piessé