



George Foster Pearce (1870-1952)

Senator for Western Australia 1901-1938

Born at Mount Barker, South Australia, George Foster Pearce was a carpenter by trade who migrated to the Western Australian goldfields in the 1890s. He became active in union affairs and Labor politics, and was selected to run as a Labor candidate in the first Senate elections in 1901 by the Perth Trades and Labor Council.

One of the youngest senators in the first Parliament, Pearce was to have a distinguished parliamentary career spanning almost 38 years, 25 of which he spent as a government minister. He was Minister for Defence at a time critical to the development of the armed services of Australia and came to be regarded as an elder statesman greatly relied upon by prime ministers such as Hughes, Bruce and Lyons.

Pearce retired from politics following his defeat in the general election of 1937. He was appointed Privy Councillor in 1921, an officer of the French Legion d'honneur in 1924 and was knighted in 1927.

The state of Western Australia was also represented in the first Senate by:

Miles Staniforth Cater Smith

Alexander Perceval Matheson

Hugh de Largie

Edward Augustine Harney

Norman Kirkwood Ewing